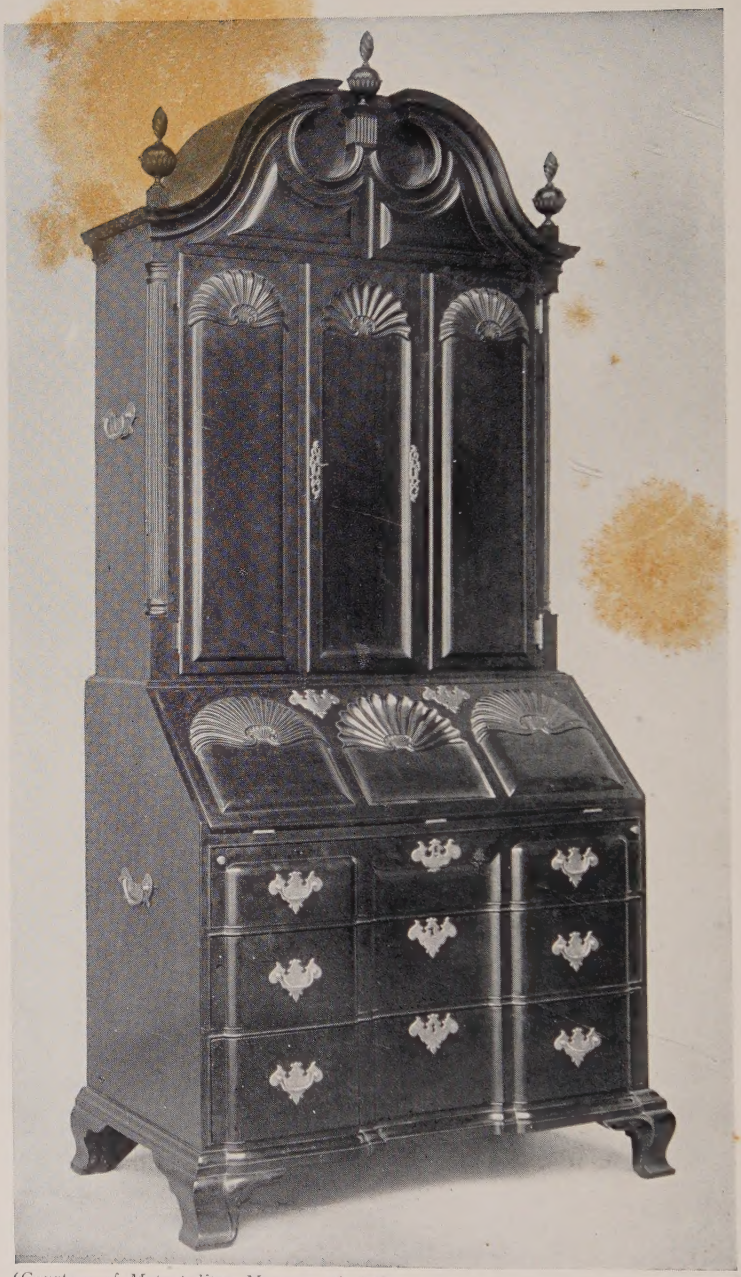
GENUINE ANTIQUE FURNITURE



(*Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art*)

FRONTISPIECE.—A SPLENDID BLOCK-FRONT SECRETARY-CUPBOARD BY JOHN GODDARD, OF NEWPORT, RHODE ISLAND. (See page 199)

GENUINE

Antique Furniture

BY

MAJOR ARTHUR DE BLES

Author of "How to Distinguish the Saints in Art by Their Costumes, Symbols, and Attributes"; "Chinese Porcelains and How to Distinguish Them"; "Japanese Color Prints"; etc., etc.

WITH 200 ILLUSTRATIONS

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TO

DOROTHY M. KELLY

WHOSE INVALUABLE ASSISTANCE IN COPYING MUCH OF THE MANUSCRIPT, IN THE READING OF THE PROOFS AND THE COMPILATION OF THE INDEXES, HAS MADE POSSIBLE THE COMPLETION OF THIS BOOK.

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PART I

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THIS volume—a succinct and practical guide, not only to the study of antique modes in furniture and the historical events which led to their steady, forward-moving evolution, but also for the connoisseur and his disciples, the independent collectors—is inspired by the belief that there is no branch of domestic life closer to the hearts and minds of all modern men and women than that of household furniture.

Indeed there *can* be no more important branch of art than that which regulates the forms of the furniture among which our children grow up, for such forms, according to their good or their bad taste, their harmonious or their crude lines, their satisfying or their poor proportions, their skilful or their careless craftsmanship, must inevitably leave their impress on the minds of the young people who develop under their silent, but none the less eloquent, influence. Our children will be the first to deny any such influence, to disclaim any like "sissyish" effect

upon their minds, but, despite all such denials, actuated by that curious pride which invades the minds of all growing youngsters, the environment of the inanimate objects among which we spend the formative years of our lives does leave an indelible impression upon the sensitive plates of our brains, an impression which is never entirely effaced by the events of our later years.

Those of us who have made a life-study of furniture styles, their development and its contributory causes, are well aware that each mode has been the reflection of the spirit of the period which produced it. Fewer, perhaps, have learned to realize that each style is equally the child of that spirit, and, as such, betrays its collective mentality to the generations following it.

It is, therefore, our duty to ourselves and to our immediate and more remote descendants, but still more to the memory of those who made of this country a great nation, to provide history with causes for praise, rather than blame and contumely. And that verdict of history will not be based solely upon commercial greatness, nor on the astuteness which has created it, but upon such achievements as may have been attained in the realm of the arts, graphic and applied, literature, science or that finer diplomacy

which in due time will avert the devastating influence of war. One can only build for the Future on foundations laid by the Past, and in spite of the incessant preaching of iconoclastic professors to the effect that we must create new things and completely forget the past, let our readers look back upon their own history and that of this country and note to what an extent all the actions of today are but developments of earlier facts and theories. From the Constitution downwards!

Egypt and Greece owe their immortality to the gigantic works of art which their children created for their glory. The Roman Empire stands eternal because of the administrative splendors which enlightened her rule, and of the great code of laws of Justinian, the basis of all modern law and equity. Chaldea, Assyria, Babylon and ancient Persia, on the other hand, have become little but memories, for their glory rested chiefly upon military laurels; while in more recent times, Italy and Spain, the former ever to be looked up to as the cradle of that fantastic movement, the Renaissance, which changed the intellectual direction of the entire world,—as then known,—and the latter only temporarily great, because conquest, with its trail of blood, rapine and intolerance, was its only support, are perfect exam-

ples of the undying truth that Mind will always, in the end, triumph over Matter. The only verdict of any consequence in the trial of the world and its component parts is the verdict of History. Civilizations based on military glory, alone, have never survived.

We are all apt to regard the years of our lives as simply composed of so many months, weeks, days and minutes. Thus we lose perspective. The world is many millions of years old, and every second of that incalculable time has seen a step forward in the evolutionary movement. Nothing new is ever invented, nor can be. Everything springs, directly or indirectly, from something that has gone before, following in this the inexorable rule. And the short life of a human being is of no interest to the world, unless in it he has contributed something to the great cause of progress.

Impatience is folly. History is composed of enormously long ages which, as we read of them, appear to us, who cannot see far ahead, as of short duration. We complain, for example, complain bitterly, that we have not yet found means to abolish war in the decade which has elapsed since the close of the World War, again giving proof of our shortsightedness and lack of proper perspective. Yet in our history books,

treating of the ancient nations of the world, we constantly find such phrases as, "The peace lasted only a brief period, when war again broke out," and on consulting the dates we discover that the "brief period" was 250 to 300 years, which in our eyes would seem an eternity, longer, indeed, than the whole modern life of this country.

Therefore, let us remember that History alone will have any say in the world's verdict of our achievements. Let each of us strive to learn all we can glean from the great works of our predecessors in order that we may be mentally equipped to take the fullest advantage of the lessons provided by their works, in most cases consecrated by Time, and invaluable as fundamental models for our share in the evolutionary process.

. . . . . .

In this book we have adopted a method which is rarely employed even in the works of the most authoritative writers on our subject, for, in the minds of many of them, dates are more important than forms. We refer to the "error" of classifying furniture by "periods" instead of by "styles." Now a piece of Gothic furniture can be reproduced with absolute perfection today;—*vide* Viollet-le-Duc's adaptations

—but while it would be quite correct to call such a piece "Gothic style" it would obviously be absurd to label it "Gothic period." Yet similar errors are made by museum authorities all over the world, by compilers of catalogues, by antique furniture dealers, and, alas, by the majority of writers about period styles. We constantly find such terms as the following, all in one book or catalogue: Sheraton period, Louis XVI period, Hepplewhite period, Adam period, Directoire period, Empire period, as though each one of these represented a distinct epoch in furniture development, whereas they are all more or less contemporary, and a Hepplewhite chair could quite correctly be termed a "Louis XVI" *period* piece, though it could NOT be ticketed "Louis XVI *Style*." This point is of the utmost importance to the student of furniture, and cannot be sufficiently emphasized.

. . . . . .

Genuine antique furniture is much rarer than is generally believed. This sounds like a truism. It is a truth! And a very necessary one in the present day. All over America, Canada, Australia and other countries, there is a veritable mania for collecting antique furniture, for no other reason—in the majority of

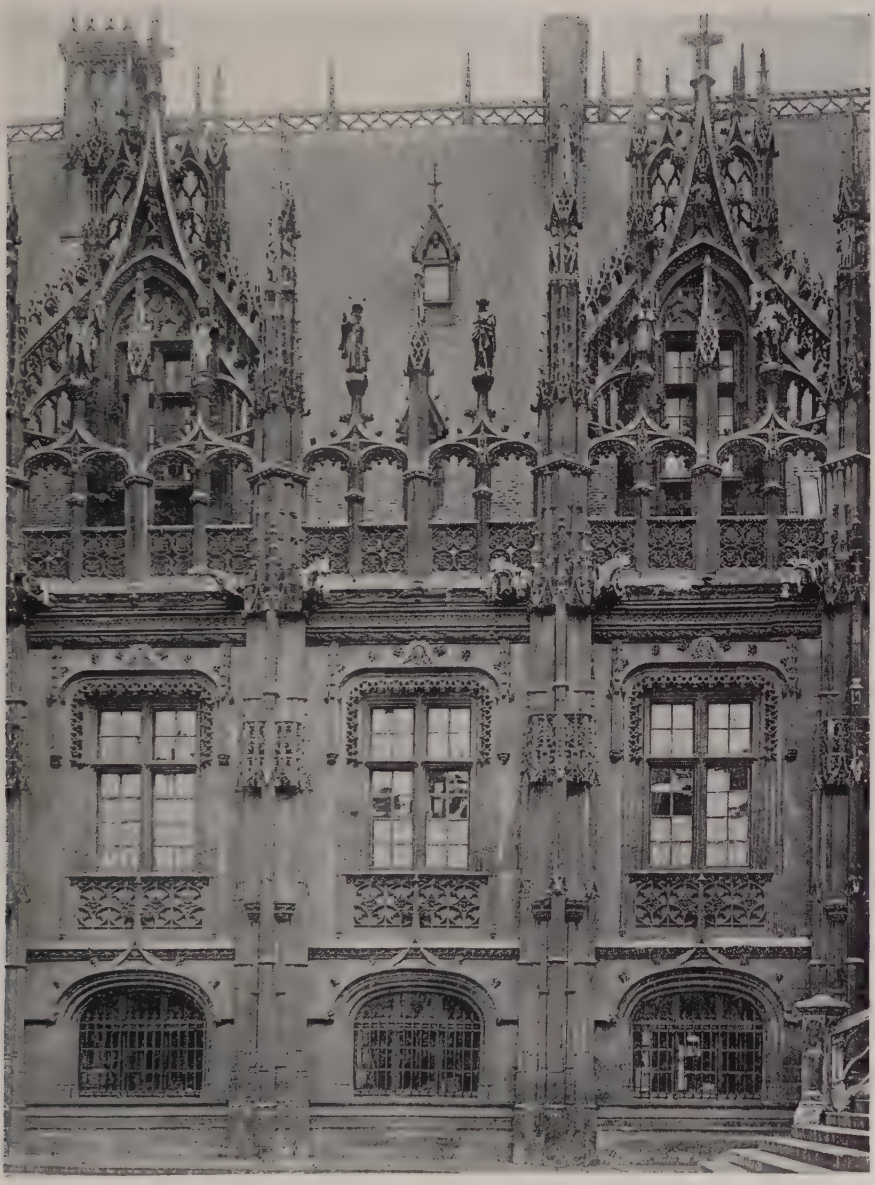


PLATE I.—"PALAIS DE JUSTICE," ROUEN, IN THE LATE GOTHIC STYLE.
(See page 31)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE II, a.—FIFTEENTH CENTURY GOTHIC CHEST WITH FOUR-CENT ARCHES, "ORBEVOIES" AND FISH-NET PATTERN. (See pages 36, 49)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE II, b.—BEAUTIFUL FIFTEENTH CENTURY GOTHIC OAK "CREDENCE," WITH PIERCED "FLAMBOYANT" PANELS. (See page 52)

cases—than that it is, or is believed to be, antique, . . . and worth money.

Yet a moment's reflection should inform the amateur collector, who, without expert knowledge, not only of furniture styles and their proportions, the history and meaning of their ornament, goes off into out-of-the-way corners of France and England in search of a "Holy Grail" almost as impossible of attainment as that which Sir Percival set out to find on Mont Salvat, that his quest must remain a hopeless and unprofitable one, save in very rare cases.

Dear readers! has it never occurred to you that owing to the enormous increase of interest during the past decade in decorative antique furniture, the enterprising dealers and their scouts have searched the only four countries whose furniture has a real market value, with a fine tooth comb, and that the sole pieces of worth which come into the open market today are those which are sold at the public auction of famous old houses, or some great collector's sale? And even in such sales, irresponsible and unscrupulous auctioneers frequently plant pieces of their own such as the deceased or bankrupt collector would have passed by with a cursory glance.

Therefore, when you make some remarkable "find" in a distant farm-house in France, England

or America or in some lovely hill-town in Italy, do not immediately jump to the conclusion that you have attained the unachievable and found something that the sharp-eyed dealers have missed. It is far more likely that that equally sharp-witted dealer is calmly—or impatiently—waiting for a telegram announcing that a fish has taken the hook. Why be the fish?

It is, of course, quite impossible to build around the prospective collector of old furniture, an impenetrable wall of precautions to be taken against the tricks of the "faker," of points to examine for evidence of such trickery, of absolute facts of style, finish or execution—save in a few rare instances—and, still less, of the effects of time, strong light, and care or lack thereof, upon the cabinet-work or the wood itself. Unfortunately, as every new safeguard is thought out, the tricksters counter it by some new stratagem, and now that there are so many wealthy collectors in the market for "genuine" antique furniture, the profits made on spurious pieces is great enough to allow of the payment of sufficiently high wages to really skilled craftsmen to make detection still more difficult. The old guarantee of quality of workmanship is no longer safe, nor is the price demanded always a proof of the genuineness of a piece

to be sold, for only too frequently, in these times, is a piece judged by its price. If it is high, the prospective purchaser feels sure of its antiquity, forgetting that men have ever been gamblers, and the maker of, or dealer in, spurious furniture will frequently "take a chance" on the collector being caught by the very fact of its high price.

In the purchase of genuine antiques, there is but one safe rule for the guidance of the would-be collector, *viz:* a careful study of the styles of the periods in vogue during the centuries in which "modern" decorative furniture was made, from pieces whose authenticity is vouched for by the authorities of the great museums of the Old World, as regards European furniture, and of this country, as far as American antiques are concerned. This careful study should include, particularly, the feeling and details of a piece, its color, craftsmanship, and *patina*, but it should ever be remembered by the prospective collector that "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing" and that in studying seriously, in order to avoid disappointments and heavy financial loss, one must always commence with the most perfect pieces available. Then, when the memory of these has been thoroughly assimilated, second-grade work will betray its discrepancies in every point almost inevitably.

But the collecting or the study of any but the finest pieces of any form of art is not only a waste of time, but a destructive force in the preparation of your own mind for the trap of the trickster.

In buying furniture, labelled antique, *never do so in a hurry.* Take all the time required for examination; make the dealer place the piece in a strong light; examine cupboards and drawers, inside and out; and refuse to be lulled into security by specious arguments and unprovable pedigrees. *And finally have the piece delivered to you at your own home on approval for thought and examination, and if necessary the advice of an independent expert.* Furthermore, a piece may even be perfectly genuine and in an untouched condition, yet be utterly unsuited to your requirements or its future surroundings. Again —and we could continue eternally in this pessimistic strain—there is much which quite properly is labelled antique, but age alone is no excuse for the demand of a high purchase price. Age plus quality, when found, form a valuable combination, but antiques which were made for peasants' cottages, or country school-houses, or taverns, have no value for the collector of furniture—unless such collector specialises in this type of product, of set purpose.

The great vogue of antique furniture, in the

majority of cases simply for its age—or apparent age —has produced an immense amount of "antique" furniture of no true market value—which cannot increase—and but little artistic or historical worth. It has also produced new types of dealers. Furniture dealers might be classed as follows:

(1) The honest dealer-expert who sells only furniture of the finest quality in an untouched condition, and is thoroughly competent in the choice of such pieces when he is purchasing.

(2) The honest dealer who is *not* an expert, but quite honorably sells pieces of which the authenticity has been guaranteed to him by a third party, who may or may not be honest and expert . . . or simply one of the two . . . or neither.

(3) The honest dealer who sells restored pieces and informs the prospective purchaser of such restorations, and makes his prices accordingly.

(4) The dishonest dealer who sells as genuine untouched furniture—the only kind which is a good investment—pieces which have been more or less cleverly restored.

(5) The dishonest dealer who trades in simple types of old furniture, which have been carved over and decorated spuriously in order to give them a greater financial value.

(6) The dishonest dealer who sells modern reproductions, cleverly faked, as genuine pieces. This last tribe, whose numbers are legion, obtains most of its merchandise from France and Belgium and Spain and Italy, where great quantities of spurious furniture are manufactured yearly, some of it very cleverly, by skilled workers.

Now if there is no excuse for a dealer selling, as untouched antiques, pieces which have been honorably or dishonorably restored, there is but little more for the collector to be caught by such tricks.

It is not difficult to see whether a French piece of any of the 17th and 18th century Louis periods is or is not in an untouched condition, but it would be unwise to reveal the secret of the simplest method of detection, for such revelation would lead to counter-measures on the part of the dishonest dealers and the men who make furniture for them. Suffice, therefore, to say: look carefully at the curves in such pieces, and never fail to examine them in the full light of day. Variations in the color of the wood will often provide a first clue. Then use common-sense and your powers of deduction as to the correctness of the design particularly at the constructional joints.

In oak and walnut English furniture, examine

the traces of wear. See whether these are or are not logical, given the use to which the pieces were put. Take into consideration the different effects of light on a piece intended to be near a window, and on one which was placed in a darker part of the room, as well as on a high or a low piece.

In mahogany and satinwood 18th century English furniture, take into consideration the effect of age on West Indian wood, and the differences between it and the East Indian variety which is less valuable.

In highly-decorative, brilliantly-carved pieces, *e.g.* French Renaissance pieces, or indeed in any which have deep hollows, search for evidences, not of age—the dealer will provide these—but of "youth," in the *logical* accumulation of dust in the hollows, caked into, even incorporated with the wood itself, in a genuine old piece. Examine carefully the edges of carving, and bear in mind how it would be worn in some places and left sharp in others . . . and which places. Also the patina and which parts are—or should be—the most highly-polished.

Examine the "carcases" of chests, and commodes, and cabinets, of English style of the end of the 17th century, for Dutch pieces resemble them very closely, but have no value in comparison with

English wares. Other points to be noted are given in the chapters devoted to each style of furniture.

One might continue, in this wise, for the length of the entire book, but, as "too many laws engender lawlessness," so too great a profusion of "don'ts" will lead to confusion and costly errors in purchasing.

The last piece of advice, therefore, that we shall give here, is: "Be sceptical always, and never over-anxious to buy." The dealer is always anxious to sell, particularly "doubtful" pieces.

. . . . . .

The study of antique furniture is a life-long one, and a most amusing, if one has a well-developed sense of humor at one's own expense. Without long experience, however, even the sense of humor is unnecessary!

When we realize that connoisseurship in furniture involves a fairly accurate knowledge of the histories of many nations and their inter-relations; their arts, the origins and significance thereof, including that of "interior decoration" of bygone ages; of the history of ornament and even of heraldry; a knowledge of the history of the craftsmen's guilds and of their laws, privileges, and responsibilities; a sound

knowledge of wood-grains, inlay and veneering, in addition to a finely attuned sense of proportion and of what constitutes good workmanship, not to mention instinct, and well-developed powers of intuition and deduction; we can see why the purchase of genuine *antique* furniture—with the possibility of it being more than just genuine furniture,—is not a thing to be undertaken lightly.

Again the amount of furniture sold as antique, particularly of the earlier styles, is distinctly reminiscent of Oliver Herford's picture of the "Mayflower" with a high deck-load of spinning-wheels. Furniture, in the past, *i.e.*, *decorative* furniture, was the possession of the few, not of the masses. It was all hand-made, by master-workmen, and to arrive at the state of master-workman meant long years of apprenticeship and journeymanship. No other than a master was allowed to sell his wares. And the ranks of the masters in any of the great guilds were closed tight against producers of any bad or slovenly work. In consequence, the amount of furniture produced altogether during the periods of interest to collectors was both very restricted and very good. We leave the deduction to the reader!

. . . . . .

Furniture of some sort has been used almost since the beginning of house-building, and it is indeed possible that the men of the Paleolithic Age—27,000 years ago—who executed the remarkable "paintings" in the caves of Altamira, in Spain, and the grottoes of Lortet, in France, may have ornamented their dwellings with crudely decorative furniture. But this is, indeed, pure conjecture, based solely on the desire of men, as we know of them for the past 7000 years, to display their skill on every object within their reach.

And here it might be well to define the exact meaning of the word "furniture", as used throughout this book and in the conversations of those who are versed in this most fascinating of subjects. "Furniture" is, of course, anything that goes to furnish or decorate, whether it be cabinet-work, or hangings, or musical instruments or pictures. In short, the name explains itself, as "that which furnishes"—hence, decorates. In Japan, for instance, they talk about sword-furniture, meaning the decorative hilt and guard and various adornments of the hilt and scabbard. One speaks currently of horse-furniture, meaning the saddle and bridle, or the collars and traces and other trappings which "furnish" the horse and decorate its naked beauty.

And in a book of this sort or in the language of collectors, experts and dealers, the word "furniture" means purely *decorative* specimens of the cabinet-makers' art, such as were ordered and used by the wealthy classes of people in the principal European countries, the people whose position gave them the social weight *to create fashions*, and so to impress their ideas upon the furniture or dress or fabrics as to form a distinctive type, which became known as the STYLE of the period in which such persons lived, and, we might almost say, ruled.

FIG. 1.

We know from the chair-frame of Hatshepsu, who reigned over Egypt jointly with her father Thothmes I in the 16th century before our era, now preserved in the British Museum,—as well as from innumerable carvings in granite and basalt, that the ancient Egyptians had a keen love of highly-decorative furniture not only in their households, but also in their tombs,—the latter for the purpose of accompanying the Dead on their journey into the Unknown

regions beyond. The recent discoveries in the tomb of King Tut-ankh-amen by the late Earl of Carnaervon and Mr. Howard Carter, which have been pictured innumerable times all over the world, have shown people to what an extent the ornamentation of furniture went in those far-off days, and how fantastically the precious metals and stones were used in their design and fabrication. The father and co-ruler of Queen Hatshepsu, mentioned above, was —it may be noted, *en passant*—the first to be buried in the Valley of the Kings, where Lord Carnaervon and Mr. Carter made their wonderful discovery. The objects of furniture found in the tomb of Tut-ankh-amen, are in much finer condition than the British Museum's chair of Queen Hatshepsu, not so much on account of the comparatively slight difference in age, as from the fact that the young monarch's burial-place was found intact, and had never been opened and pillaged by robbers, as had every tomb previously unearthed in Egypt. The more important pieces of Tut-ankh-amen's grave furniture have remained in Cairo, but students can study their design, and even coloring, from the many reproductions extant. They will find the exercise valuable when we come to the last of the French modes, which owed their inspiration largely to the ancient Egyptians.

The Greek civilization also used decorative furniture, generally painted, but now completely extinct; while of the great Roman period, the age of Augustus, only an occasional piece can be discovered by a millionaire collector. Even the *triclinia*—the reclining benches (Fig. 2) upon which men lay during meal-times—which are to be found in some

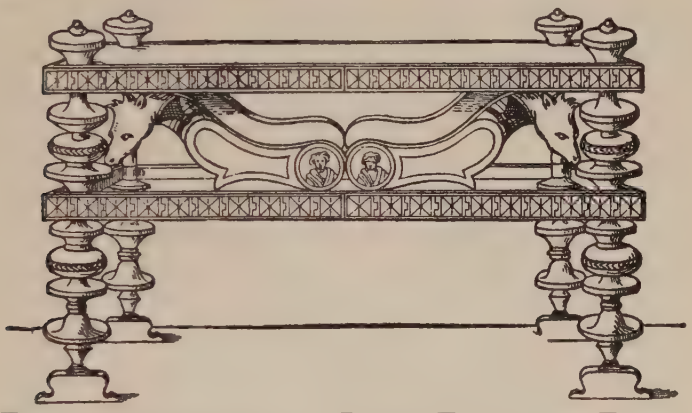


FIG. 2.—ONE SECTION OF A ROMAN TRICLINIUM. THERE WERE THREE, PLACED HORSE-SHOE-WISE AT A TABLE.

museums are not entirely above suspicion, particularly those which are in a very excellent state of repair. The type of ivory—or bone—and precious-wood mosaic with which they were adorned is a god-send to the faker who scents a victim. But from an historical standpoint the Romans invented one piece of furniture which found its repercussion in a later age. We refer to the *curule* or X-shaped folding

chair (Fig. 3) which we all know in its Renaissance form, either as the "Savonarola" or the "Dantesca" chair, the difference between which will be explained in a later chapter.

The *triclinium* may have been the precursor of the couches and sofas of later date extending up to and destined to pass our own times; but we fear that, even had the Roman *triclinium* never existed, man's inherent love of comfort—not to say laziness—would have created its modern counterpart.

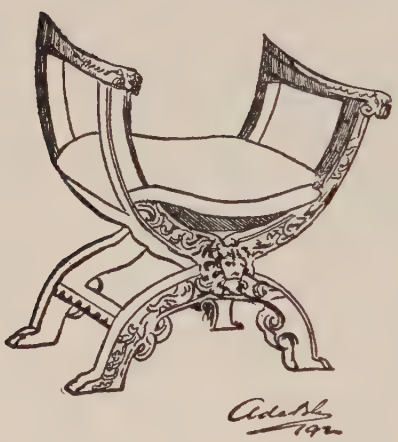


Fig. 3.

Now, as stated previously, all the earliest civilizations produced beautiful furniture. But only in the palaces of the kings, or their favorites, was it found, and it was never universal, as a style, even in a lower plane of ornamentation. We know from documents that the monarchs who ruled over the now-disappeared cities of Babylon and Thebés lived in the midst of unbridled luxury, to an extent almost unbelievable to our material minds.

"The Golden room was empty. At the four corners lights burned in golden tripods filled with scented oil, their slim flames of blue and rose illuminating with a tender changing radiance the sapphires and rubies of the ceiling. A golden couch, immense, magnificent, set high on carven lions' feet, was spread luxuriously with dyed rugs and draperies of gold thread and scarlet. Opposite, a golden table of similar proportions carved with the spreading wings of eagles and with lions' heads bore three vessels for the gods. . . . On either side of the fountains were set tables of ivory inlaid with gold. The table of the Chamberlain was of ivory with feet of carved and gilded pine-cones, while the guests rested their pointed shoes upon ivory stools carved like the table."

And this was in the late Babylonian era when Artaxerxes, the Persian monarch, was host to the aged Athenian general, Themistocles, who, exiled after his great victory at Salamis (480 B.C.) over the Persian, Xerxes, finally found a home at Magnesia in the realm of the son of his defeated opponent. The scene above is supposed to have occurred *circa* 449 B.C.

However, no pieces of those early days, even of the late Roman civilization, are extant today, at least, outside of a lucky museum here and there, and then, are in a state of almost complete decay, or have been carefully "restored" which is excellent from an educational standpoint, though, archeologically, a

crime. Therefore we shall make a leap of some ten centuries, to alight again in that era which Dr. James Walsh so aptly styles, "The Thirteenth, Greatest of Centuries," the era of early Gothic Art, with all its imperishable glories.

PLATE III, a.—TUDOR ARCH AND SALAMANDERS OF FRANCIS I, ON THE NOW DEMOLISHED VANDERBILT HOUSE IN NEW YORK. (See pages 38, 111)

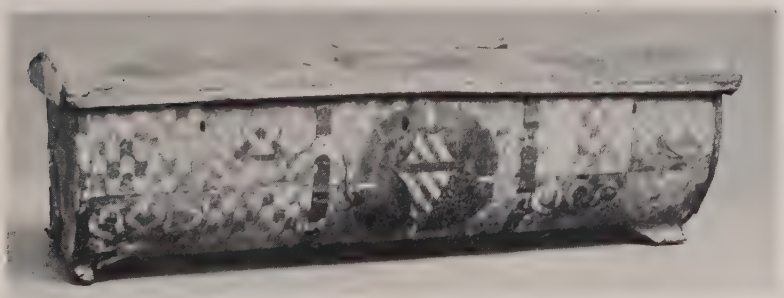


PLATE III, b.—NORTH ITALIAN TILTING-CHEST. (See page 44)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE IV, a.—SECTION OF FIFTEENTH CENTURY GOTHIC CHEST-FRONT, IN ARCHITECTURAL WINDOW STYLE. (See pages 47, 49)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE IV, b.—GOTHIC CHAIR WITH LINEN-FOLD PANELS. FIFTEENTH CENTURY. (See page 50)

PART II

CHAPTER II

FURNITURE OF THE GOTHIC ERA

IN THE furniture collections of the world, public or private, such examples of genuine Gothic furniture as they may contain—with a few very rare exceptions—all belong to the last, the Decadent, style of that most exquisite and brilliant of architectonic conceptions.

In architecture, the Gothic spirit passed through three distinct phases, corresponding respectively to the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries, though there were, of course, transitional edifices on both sides of the main period, that is to say, in the 12th century—the transition from romanesque (or Norman) to true Gothic, *e.g.*, St. Denis near Paris, Chartres, Notre Dame de Paris (West front), Durham, and Canterbury Cathedral—and in the 16th century—the transition from late Gothic to Renaissance, *e.g.*, Milan Cathedral (West front), the Northern tower of Chartres Cathedral * and Arras Cathedral, now de-

** St. Denis and Durham are acknowledged universally to be transitional in style; Chartres, also, but is much closer to pure Gothic, its outstanding romanesque feature being the placing of the three portals all together in the*

stroyed. Such transition works bear evidences of both the old and the new modes, in varying proportions, according to their date. And, like all furniture up to the end of the 16th century, at least, Gothic furniture followed closely upon the architectural mode in vogue, not only in general appearance, but even more so in ornamental detail.

There remains practically no decorative furniture of the 13th and 14th century Gothic style—certainly none that will ever come on the market or be offered for sale by antique dealers—save, perhaps, an occasional simple hutch, and of these, beware! for reasons explained later. A very rare—not to say "doubtful"—14th century chest, here and there, in England; no pieces of either century in France; that sums up the total of existing Gothic furniture made prior to the years 1410-15, and almost all the earlier chests, which are still extant, were either vestment, or cope-chests, in the possession of ancient churches in England. We shall have more to say about chests and their importance presently.

There is, however, a famous old *armoire* (cup-

centre section between the towers, instead of in the true Gothic manner (see Figs. 6 and 8). The transitional character of the West front of Notre Dame is betrayed mostly by its almost unbroken tiers of horizontal *lines, which in slightly later edifices,* e.g. *Rheims Cathedral, and the North and South sides of Notre Dame itself are, almost everywhere, "cut" by upward-pointing gables and pinnacles.*

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE VI, a.—TYPICAL DANTESCA CHAIR WITH LATE PSEUDO-CERTOSINA DECORATION. (See page 76)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE VI, b.—TYPICAL SAVONAROLA CHAIR WITH "CERTOSINA" DECORATION. (See page 76)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE VII, a.—CARVED AND GILDED RENAISSANCE ROMAN "CASSONE" c. 1550. (See page 78)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE VII, b.—CARVED "CASSONE" WITH AN EARLY FIFTEENTH CENTURY PAINTED PANEL IN FRONT AND ON EACH SIDE. (See page 79)

board) of the 13th century in the church at Obazine, in the Corrèze department of France, but in spite of the date assigned to it, it is more 12th century romanesque in style than Gothic, with its two semi-circular headed panels, studded with nails (Fig. 4). There is another such cupboard in Noyon Cathedral, slightly later than the Obazine relic, on which can be seen traces of a painted canvas that formerly was glued to the woodwork, probably as a means of protection.

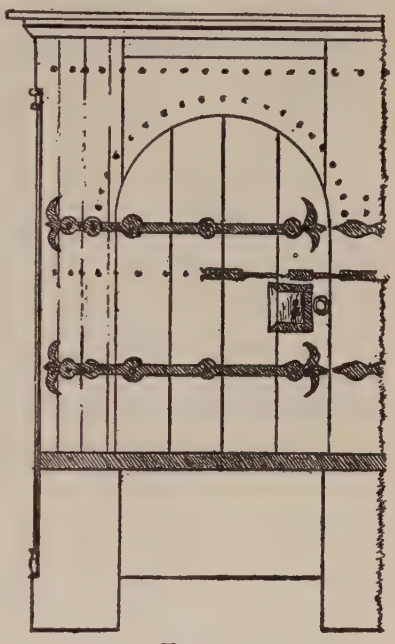


Fig. 4.

Now by the end of the first decade of the 15th century, Gothic architecture had lost its pristine, simple, beauty, and had fallen into a state of decadence, expressed in the weakening of the constructional features of the edifices of the style, *viz.*: the pointed arch, buttresses, and flying buttresses, while even the essential walls were almost entirely supplanted by excessive, though beautifully exe-

cuted, ornamentation. Thus, the pointed arch, that noble "mitre" which crowns the portals and windows of such cathedrals as Notre Dame de Paris, and the still more beautiful Notre Dame de Reims (Rheims Cathedral), gave place to a decorative, but constructionally useless four-centered arch, as for example in the *Palais de Justice* at Rouen and the top section of the North towers of Amiens and Chartres (Figs. 5 and 6),

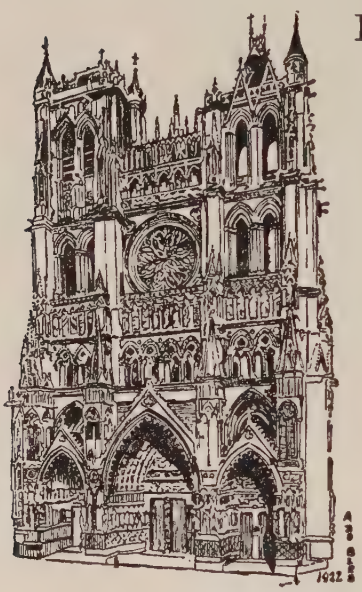


FIG. 5.—WEST FRONT OF AMIENS CATHEDRAL.

FIG. 6.—WEST FRONT OF CHARTRES CATHEDRAL.

which, while they are of beautiful workmanship, destroy the effect of homogeneity.

But, whereas in architecture, this decadence was fatal to the life of the style, the very beauty it produced *ornamentally*, made the chests and chairs and credences of the late Gothic era as lovely works of art as have ever been produced by any people in any age.

Before proceeding any farther, we believe it necessary to go more thoroughly into the true meaning of the word "decadent" as used in the art sense. It is important, firstly because we are apt, in our loose latter-day language, to apply it incorrectly; secondly, because we shall discover its symptoms appearing consistently right through the whole cycle of historic furniture design.

The unpleasant sound of the word is unmerited to a wide degree, for the decadent period of any art is invariably that of the art's zenith *as regards technical perfection* and *greatest apparent beauty*. Consequently its products possess a wider appeal, to the uninitiated, than the simpler works of the earlier years of the art. Travellers who look with awe at Durham Cathedral or Notre Dame, but fail to understand their elemental beauty, go into raptures over the Rouen *Palais de Justice* (Plate I) or the Tomb

of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey, or the House of Jacques Cœur, at Bourges (Fig. 7).

Now it will be obvious to our readers that every form of art—fine or applied—*must* pass through a certain line of growth or development, before it works itself out and dies, at last, from inanition.

Fig. 7.—The "Maison de Jacques Cœur" at Bourges.

In the beginning, there is, what we may call the "experimental" period, when the new art is born, with no precedents to guide its protagonists, no ready-made rules or tools to work with, and when such men as lay the first foundations *must* be im-

pelled by an overwhelming desire to express themselves in some new way. Without that propelling urge of immense eagerness they would never have dared to affront all the difficulties they saw lying before them. This splendid sincerity, this wholehearted enthusiasm, is what gives their charm to primitive works of art, in all its branches, whether they be great cathedrals, or Chinese porcelains, or Limoges enamels, or tapestries, or the paintings of any of the early European masters, or even American furniture of early Colonial days. In short, during this first stage, the *Matter* takes precedence over the *Manner!*

FIG. 8.—WEST FRONT OF RHEIMS CATHEDRAL

Then, when, after a lapse of time, varying in duration in direct ratio to the difficulty of the technique to be acquired, the exponents of an art find themselves able to express their still sincere ideas without the hampering drag of insufficient skill, we enter the era of Perfection, the

highest point in the Art's development, *e.g.*, Rheims Cathedral (Fig. 8), or the works of Leonardo da Vinci and Raphael, or early Kang-hsi Chinese porcelains.

Unfortunately, however, human nature is so constituted that when a new toy is put into its hand, it cannot resist breaking it, as soon as possible, to see how it works. And so, when the requisite amount of technical ability, to allow of untrammelled explorations into the further remoteness of an art, is attained by artists, they wander inevitably into the wilderness of decadence, by letting their pride of technical mastery dominate the source of their inspiration, and they become less interested in uttering a thought than in the means of expressing it. The *Manner*, with these men, has become more important than the *Matter*.

Such are the first three stages in the evolution of any art. Alas! there is still a fourth stage, that of Degradation, which is generally meant when we speak of Decadence—a period during which the artists care neither whether they have anything of value to say, nor how they say it, but simply how much money—or it may be fame—they can obtain for saying *something*, in any way that will "get past."

It is this inevitable law of evolution that prevents an art from ever "coming back." We constantly hear or speak about "Lost Arts" and wonder why they cannot be revived, for we consider ourselves quite as clever as the men who, in former centuries, practiced them. The reason is quite simple. The technical means at our disposal today are so complete that we can skip the two great periods of Experimentation and Perfection, and so we start right in *with everything set for us* at the Decadent stage of the art.

How can the art of cabinet-making, for example, ever "come back" in this commercial age, when mechanical contrivances for making furniture not only improve, but increase and multiply, daily, to the utter annihilation of the skilled handicraftsman, whose work bore the stamp of his individuality, and told one, in every contour, every angle, every tenon, every curve, of his love for his work, and at the same time betrayed the true extent of his skill . . . or lack thereof?

Commerce, and its illegitimate offspring, overproduction, have killed the applied arts, and today we are reduced either to copying or adapting, seldom successfully, the consecrated models of the past, or to *attempting* the creation of something new, . . . and

that in the midst of a competition which will swamp the new movement as soon as it is born.

It will now be understood why Gothic *furniture* of the 15th and 16th centuries,—the decadence of the style in architecture,—profited by that very decadence, for it was the product of the artist's desire to employ all his technical skill in making it as beautiful in ornament as he was able. And no ornamentation was ever as beautiful as Gothic at its best, as in the pierced panels of some credences.

As we said before, all Gothic decorated furniture extant belongs to this period, *i.e.*, the 15th century, and bears upon it the clearly distinctive marks of the Flamboyant style, so-called from the flame-like shapes of its delicate traceries. The simple, pointed, arches of the 13th and 14th centuries are but rarely found in furniture. The decorative four-centered arch in the form of the bracket or basket-handle takes its place everywhere. Gothic furniture is Gothic architecture in miniature, and the backs of chairs, the sides of chests, the doors of credences (church cupboards) are all carved, either in strong relief (*orbevoies*) or in pierced work, in the form of windows, as in our illustrations. (Plate II, a and b.)

To all intents and purposes, the only pieces of even 15th century Gothic furniture, which have been

PLATE VIII.—SPLENDID CERTOSINA DESK-CABINET. NORTH ITALIAN SIXTEENTH CENTURY. (See page 102)

PLATE IX.—GOTHIC-RENAISSANCE STALL OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY. (See page 110)

carried down to us, are a few chests, a very minute number of chairs,—some with canopies,—and some very rare credences, which, when genuine, seldom find their way into the open market. A few rudely-decorated hutches can also be found, but as their decoration, as well as their general form is so simple, they are only too frequently "antiqued" reproductions in the style, for they are very easy to counterfeit.

The characteristic feature of all 15th century Gothic is then the four-centre arch. This is true to such an extent that whenever it is seen, either in architecture or in furniture, it indicates, beyond possibility of question, that the part of a Gothic building or any piece of furniture in which it appears could not have been constructed at any other time than the 15th or early 16th century; or, . . . in reproduction or outright fraudulent copy, later.

It is most probable that it derived directly from the charming fish-net design which is so frequently found in the Gothic window traceries of the late 14th century, for the upper half of each mesh of this design forms in itself a complete four-centre arch. (See Plate II, a) And we shall see how, throughout the history of furniture design, every apparently novel motive had its artistic birth in something that had

gone before, or else in some historic connection, *e.g.*, the eagle-motive origin in Chapter XI.

In conjunction with the four-centre arch in the 15th century we may find the ornamental crockets in the square form (See Fig. 9. and 10) which characterizes all ornament, in the last period of true Gothic, *i.e.*, before Renaissance "classicistic" forms began their invasion of the "Free Style."

Fig. 9.

Fig. 10.

In the 16th century, the bracket-arch gradually gave place in France and England to a low flat arch, with mouldings decorated with naturalistic Gothic leafage, but with Renaissance details, particularly panels carved with conventional scroll-work amid classical motives. Of the now defunct Vanderbilt house on Fifth Avenue at 52nd Street, the doorway (See Plate III, a) was in the form of this so-called "Tudor Arch," but instead of the usual crockets, it was surmounted by the heraldic salamanders of Francis I of France, the patron of Leonardo da Vinci,

Raphael, Andrea del Sarto, Benvenuto Cellini, and other Italian masters too numerous to mention.

In England we find, instead of salamanders, the Tudor Rose,—though never as crockets,—for Henry VII was of the House of Tudor, and succeeded to the Yorkist throne of Richard III in the year 1485, reigning until 1509. At that date, Henry VIII (1509-1547) became King of England, and emulating the art activities of his rival of France, drove out the last remnants of the Gothic style in decorative furniture by inviting to England the most important Italian masters of the Renaissance who had not already taken service with Francis I.

Now let us examine a little more in detail the types of Gothic furniture which might conceivably come upon the market, or otherwise be open to purchase. But it is well to remember that only French and English Gothic furniture has any real financial worth. An occasional German piece *might* be good, but the land of its birth was too much disturbed by constant warfare for genuine pieces to be in anything but a very parlous state.

Before starting with the earliest type of household furniture in use in the 15th century, *viz.*, the chest or coffer, let us glance at the conditions under which the families of the feudal nobles—the only

class, apart from the prelates, who in reality formed part of it, that could afford decorative furniture—passed their lives.

Northern Europe, as well as Italy, was one great armed camp, dotted with fortified castles and embattled towns. Every man's hand was lifted against his brother, not only metaphorically, but actually, in many instances, and, when the great barons or overlords were not at war among themselves, claiming their 40-day service from their fief-holders, or in armed insurrection against their own suzerain, the anointed sovereign, their vavassors, vassals and subvassals, to the *nth* degree, were accustomed to attack, plunder, sack and burn each other's possessions, with, or without, any justifiable provocation. "Fight for fighting's sake" might be used as the slogan of the Dark and Middle Ages.

It is not difficult, therefore, to realize that the times were not the most favorable to the development of what is, essentially, an art of stability—that of furniture-making.

Whenever a noble, or some wealthy knight, set forth upon a peaceful journey to a neighboring castle, along with his wife and children and retainers, he took good care to leave nothing of importance behind. Otherwise, he would in all likelihood return to

PLATE X, a.—"TUDOR" ARCH ON A NEW YORK HOUSE. SIXTEENTH CENTURY TRANSITION STYLE. (See page 110)

PLATE X, b.—TYPICAL SIXTEENTH CENTURY TRANSITIONAL GOTHIC-RENAISSANCE STYLE ROOF AND CHIMNEYS. (See page 110)

PLATE XI, a.—SIXTEENTH CENTURY ITALIAN CHEST INLAID WITH IVORY MEDALLIONS. (See page 112)

PLATE XI, b.—FRENCH "ROMAYNE" WORK CABINET INSPIRED BY XI, a. STYLE OF FRANCIS I. (See page 112)

find his valuables missing, through the actions of some military or semi-military marauding band, to which his absence had proved profitable. It is indeed a subject of astonishment to us that *chatelains* of those early days ever travelled at all, except when they were called out for their feudal term of armed support of their lord.

What feudalism meant in the Middle Ages may be gathered from a 13th century register kept by the Count of Champagne, the father of the famous soldier and poet, Thibaut IV, later King of Navarre. Thibaut III's possessions were divided into twenty-six districts, in the heart of each of which was a powerful stronghold. This mighty baron held his lands from the Holy Roman Emperor, the King of France, the Duke of Burgundy, the Archbishops of Rheims and Sens, the Bishops of Autun, Auxerre, and Langres, and finally from the Abbot of St. Denis. To each of these he owed feudal service when called upon, and when these various "suzerains" were at war among themselves, it must have created quite a lot of confusion, in the matter of precedence of service, alone. On the other hand, this interesting register states that Thibaut held as sub-vassals no less than two thousand minor barons, seigneurs, and knights, while many of these again owed allegiance, not only

to him, but also directly to Thibaut's own overlords, including the King of France and the clerics. A complicated situation, certainly, requiring a large measure of "secret diplomacy," fighting and so-called treachery towards one or another of this great family of inter-dependents.

In consequence of such an unsettled state of affairs, everything, that could be moved, was transported with the family in chests—or coffers—on the backs of mules, and so necessarily had to be stoutly made in order to withstand the inevitable roughness of their handling. Even the lord's chair was provided with a leather case, or bag, to enable it to be slung across a pack-animal, and the only pieces that remained in the castle were the cupboards, which, as they were incorporated in the woodwork of the panelling, were not furniture in the true sense of the word, and the valueless trestle and dormer-tables.

This explains, partially, the thickness of the wood and the resultant weight, typical of all early furniture, particularly chests, and such pieces as chairs; with or without canopies, which, of course, had to be carried by themselves. It also throws light upon the whole question of furniture and its reduction to the minimum compatible with approximate comfort, or, shall we say, lack of too much discom-

fort. Again, it explains the form of some of the earlier chests. At first we find records of very heavy oblong ones, and others—in Provence and Italy—in the shape of a boat with flattened ends and with a dome, or curved, lid. These latter were transported on the top of the larger, square chests, and contained the apparel immediately required by the noble and his lady upon arrival at their journey's end, or throughout its course. The curved lid, naturally, gave a better purchase to the binding-cords, or straps. These boat-shaped chests were fairly small, but as they bore the noble's armor of state—such are called "tilting-chests"—and the lady's full-dress robes, they were protected against damage by bands of iron which ran right round them. They usually were covered with canvas or leather, painted over with the heraldic bearings—these had become hereditary by the 13th century—of either the man alone, or the two shields of both sides of the union. There is such a chest in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, which Dr. Bode places at about 1440, and as a Florentine piece, though to our eyes, it has more of a northern appearance, and of an earlier date, from the fact that the arms of the wife are quartered separately with a conventional ribbon design—not heraldic—instead of being quartered with those of the man, as they

should have been—where the woman had a right to bear arms—in the 15th century (Plate III, b).

The usual rectangular coffer—the early medieval equivalent of the trunk "to go in the hold"—went through a number of transformations before it became the "thing of beauty" it was in the 15th and early 16th centuries.

At first, in the 13th and early 14th centuries—until 1371—these chests, like all other furniture, were made by simple joiners or carpenters, endowed with little skill, and possessing only the crudest of tools for the execution of their orders. They classed, in technical ability, with the roof-makers, rafter-layers and frame-builders of the houses. Merely rough artisans! Thus the chests they made, reflecting this *naïveté*, were also heavy and clumsy, having but one redeeming feature, *viz.*, their material solidity. The tops and sides were composed each of two heavy planks, fitted into each other with a deep groove-and-tongue joint—deep enough to allow of shrinkage and play of wood. The corners were formed by simply "butting" the board-ends against each other and fastening them with rude pegs, and as this was not sufficient to give security to the contents of these coffers, in the course of a long, rough journey over bad roads, the chest was bound into a

compact whole by heavy wrought-iron scrolls which covered a large portion of its entire surface.

But in 1371, a very important decree was signed by the Provost of Paris, Hugues Aubriot, out of the terms of which arose the important Guild of Cabinet-makers whose rulings were law for all furniture-makers until 1789—the French Revolution. The original decree was confirmed by the Parliament in 1382, and its terms were re-confirmed and modified, according to changing conditions, under Kings Louis XI, Henri III, and Louis XIV—the latter, of course, on the advice of Colbert, the "Sun-King's" discreet adviser upon all matters concerning the arts and crafts. (See Chapter X.)

The immediate results of Aubriot's legal decree, as far as our subject is concerned—we shall go into its ulterior importance later—was a great improvement in the quality of the chest, and other standard pieces of furniture. Firstly the butted corners of chests and such box-like structures, were replaced by dovetailed corners, which, being much stronger than the glued ones, permitted the elimination of much of the heavy iron scroll-work which alone had kept the earliest chests together.

Then a new method of construction was evolved. Instead of the joined planks, on the upright sides,

a solid framework of carefully-jointed pieces in rectangular forms was constructed in such a manner that it alone could stand even more strain than the solid-sided pieces of the previous style. In this framework were fitted panels of much thinner wood than that which composed the framework. Even these thin panels were deeply and elaborately carved, and finally in credences and such pieces, but not in chests, pierced, in perfect safety, for the solid construction of the carcase took all the strain off the decorative panels. In this the new guild followed the lead of the later Gothic architects, who gave more and more window-space to their cathedrals and churches, as time went on, while thinning constantly the enclosing walls, as their knowledge of pressures and thrusts increased through the teachings of experience.

As we have stated, there are a few very rare pieces which are assigned to the earlier date, *e.g.*, the Faversham chest at Rainham, England, and another at St. John's Hospital, Canterbury. Typical of this kind of chest are the buttress supports, based on the lower board of the coffer. A sort of star-like trellis pattern is usually found on the stiles and base-boards.

In the 15th century, the framework of the chests was, generally, left plain, but the inset panels were carved in low relief, either entirely in the fish-net

pattern, more or less elaborately, or with this pattern or a flamboyant design in the upper portion, and a series of pointed "windows" below. This arrangement of simulated windows in the panels was almost universal through the 15th century. There is, at the Metropolitan Museum, a chest's front panel, beautifully carved in six sections, each of which comprises a "flamboyant" rose window with upright windows below it, exact copies of cathedral windows actually existing. (Plate IV, a.) And it is noticeable that none of the six "roses" are alike in design. There is another chest front-panel, at the Metropolitan, which has not only an artistic interest, as an exquisite piece of carving, but also an historical one. It is in the late flamboyant style, with low "bracket-arches" on its four panels, each of which comprises an heraldic shield. In the two outside panels, the shields bear, respectively, a single fleur-de-lys—the arms of Louis VIII, and a crowned dolphin, for the Dauphin of France. In the two centre panels—the main ones—are the royal shield of "New France"—three fleur-de-lys—on the left, and a coat bearing the "dimidiated" arms of France and Brittany on the right.

These heraldic announcements tell us that the chest was made as a *cassone* (wedding-chest) for a Dauphin of France and a Princess of Brittany,

and the only King of France who made such a marriage *before* he ascended the throne was Francis of Angoulême, later the famous Francis I,* who, at the request of his uncle, Louis XII, married Claude, the daughter of the powerful Duchess Anne of Brittany, on May 21st, 1506. Thus we can fix exactly the date of the museum treasure.

We have gone into the story of this chest somewhat lengthily, but of set purpose, for it is to such methods of deduction that, in many cases, we are obliged to recur, if we wish to be assured of the genuine character, as well as of the exact date, of many a specimen of old furniture. For example, if this particular chest were not vouched for doubly, by the Museum authorities and its inclusion in the Morgan wing—with all that that infers—we might have doubts of its authenticity, from the very fact of its "dimidiation" of a coat-of-arms as late as 1506.†

It is in just such details that we can frequently distinguish the false from the true, for the trained

** Charles VIII married Anne of Brittany in 1491, after he ascended the throne. On his death, the new King Louis XII married his widow.*

† "Dimidiation" of arms was an old method of joining two coats, the man's and the woman's, by dividing each in half (demi) *and joining the halves of each on the same shield. It ceased to be used very early, for it created too many difficulties in the joining of halves of certain shields, e.g., the Shield of the Mayor of Winchelsea (vide English Heraldry: Charles Boutell, p. 168 and passim.)*

cabinet-makers—up to 1793—learned not only the carpentering aspect of their craft, but also the main points of heraldry and the designs of ornamentation appropriate to a style and the historic origin of such ornaments.

Fig. 11.—Canopied Gothic Chair (15th Century)

The illustrations of chests on Plates II, III and IV, with their captions, will suffice for the instruction of our readers in the matter of the general forms of the Gothic chest, so we can now proceed to the examination of the chairs in use in medieval days.

First, let us remember that chairs were literally the "Seats of the Mighty." The lower orders never used anything but rudely-fashioned stools or benches, or rough chests to sit upon. Chairs numbered rarely more than two or three, at the utmost, in the most powerful nobles' castles, one for the master of the domain, another for his wife, and possibly a third for some highly-honored guest. They were of two

general types, with or without canopies, like those in our illustrations (Plate IV, b and Fig. 11) but as ever in Gothic times, the design of the backs and other carved portions were only limited in variety by the imaginative powers of the carvers. Most, if

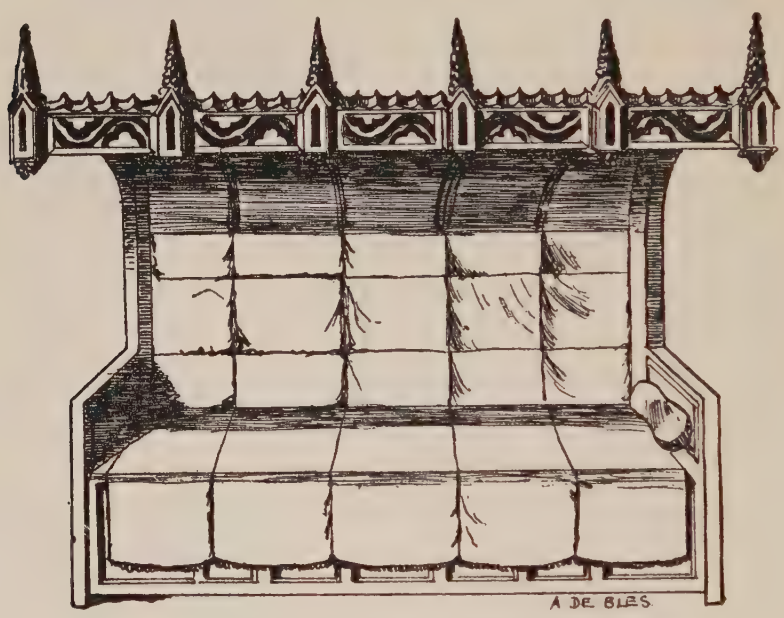


FIG. 12.—LARGE CANOPIED CHAIR MADE UP AS A BED.

not all, Gothic chairs were either painted in bright colors, or covered with painted canvas (uncarved chairs). The seat was always square, the top of a large cube-shaped chest, as it were, with the back continuing straight up, *never* canted. The arms were horizontal and parallel to each other. Some of these

chairs, particularly the later ones, had pierced traceries, again like those of church windows, in the back and sides. The earlier ones were rarely pierced —to avoid danger of a sword or dagger thrust from behind—but were carved beautifully in the same traceries, in high relief (*orbevoies*). In some castles, a sort of large double, or even triple chair, with one large canopy, took the place of single chairs, and served to seat the lord and his family or guests at the great head table on the daïs. The high canopied single chair differed in nothing—until later—from its immediate ancestor, the episcopal *cathedra*, from which is derived the word "cathedral" (church in which the bishop's throne is set). In old French, they were called *chayères*, whence, by corruption, our English word "chairs."

These large pieces served also as beds (Fig. 12), while the lesser knights and the squires and pages slept upon chests, also made up as beds, not too uncomfortably. In fact, the hard, wooden, carved chairs, even in the day-time, were not as uncomfortable as they look when we see them in museum collections, for they were lined with soft cushions, with furs thrown over them, even the stiff arms being sometimes padded. We can see when such was the case by the small nail-holes. They are generally filled

with mastic or putty which is well worth an examination as to its age and hardness.

In addition to chests and chairs, there were two other pieces of furniture in wealthy nobles' castles, the *Crédence* and the *Dressoir*. But they are so rare that genuine specimens are all in great collections. The *crédence* was a sort of cabinet on legs standing on a base. (Plate II, b.) The back of the lower portion was solid, but the front was supported on two or four legs frequently fashioned like the piers of a 15th century cathedral. It was originally an ecclesiastical object, in which to lock up the vessels required for the celebration of Mass. Hence the name "*credence*" (faith or belief), or, in the Italian, "*credenza.*"

The *dressoir* was a structure of superimposed shelves, in varying numbers according to the rank of the owner. In the 15th century, when sumptuary laws were strictly enforced, we find, indeed, such amusing statements as: "Madame de Charolais—mother of the Duchess of Burgundy—only had four shelves to her dresser, while Madame la Duchesse, her daughter, had five. I have often heard it said that no princess, except the Queen of France, should have five shelves. The dressers of countesses should only have three."

Upon the dresser, which was placed by the side of the entrance to the great hall, directly opposite the great table, stood the noble's shield of arms, and his gold and silver plate. They were *dressés* (set up), thus, to emphasize the wealth of the *chatelain*—or the visitor—hence the word *dressoir*, or in English "dresser."

Fig. 13.

In the last period of Gothic, there came into being two ornamental motives which were not strictly architectural, but limited to pieces of furniture and wood-panelling. We refer to the so-called "Linen-fold" (Fr. *Drap*) decoration with its sister, the "Parchment-fold", and the Flemish ornament in the shape of a double-ended letter Y. (Figs. 13, 14 and 16.)

Fig. 14.

The linen-fold originally was a symbolic motive

—like so many other Gothic motives. It represented the muslin cloth placed over the chalice of the Eucharist. At first, therefore, it had one single fold, as a cloth would have; but gradually—as happened with almost every motive in decoration—its original significance was forgotten and it became a mere ornament. Towards the end of the 15th century, the simple one-fold piece became a multifold panel; and, in the 16th, was so much cut and ornamented, not only at the top and bottom, but even in the middle, that by the second decade of the 16th century, the former chalice-cover motive was entirely submerged. (Fig. 15.)

Fig. 15.

Fig. 16.

The Parchment-fold was simply a derivative of the linen-fold, and is only distinguishable from it by the two or four rods around which the parchment was rolled. It followed the same artistic graph as its elder sister.

A more important, and also less clumsy and stiff decoration was the Flemish I or double-ended Y mentioned above. (Fig. 16.) Again, its origin was symbolic, for it represented the initial "I" of the Latin word "*Iesus*" (Jesus). Its presence on any Gothic piece indicates a Flemish provenance, and until the end of the 17th century we shall constantly come across it, *e.g.*, in the form of a stretcher, on Dutch and English William-and-Mary pieces—when these latter were made in a workshop ruled by a Dutch foreman. (See Chapter XI.)

This chapter on Gothic decorative furniture—and undecorated pieces have neither interest nor value, nor certainty of authenticity—is largely academic, for, partly because of the appeal of its carved traceries, partly because of its age and the fetich of the word "Gothic," partly because, as mentioned previously, a large proportion of the genuine old pieces were painted or covered with canvas, genuine Gothic furniture is now practically non-existent, but is reproduced in large quantities, particularly in Belgium, whence it is shipped to the United States. It is frequently well turned out—at least superficially—and handsome in design, as far as Flemish Gothic ever was. But no Gothic furniture should be bought,—we feel tempted to stop here—

without very careful and minute examination of every detail of the cabinet-work, the design and execution of the traceries, *real* evidences of usage—not faked effects—which matter involves sound logical thinking of the causes and effects of wear and tear. Finally, on account of the very great risks of deception taken by the purchaser of Gothic furniture, we strongly advise against paying high prices for any piece of which the authenticity cannot be proved without possibility of contest. And such pieces are, to put it optimistically, extremely rare.

We shall close this chapter on Gothic furniture with a short description of the great Guild of Cabinet-makers, whose influence did so much to regulate styles, workmanship and quality, from 1371 up till the time of the French Revolution in 1789, when the old guilds of all the crafts were dissolved.

In the 13th and early 14th centuries, the wood used for the making of church stalls and castle furniture was so roughly treated, so hacked about and wasted, by unskilled joiners, possessing only the most rudimentary tools that it became necessary to regulate the craft in some way, and in 1371 the then Provost—Lord Mayor—of Paris, in a judgment later confirmed by Parliament on Sept. 4th, 1382, laid down the rules he considered most suitable for the

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE XII.—TYPICAL CABINET OF THE SCHOOL OF JACQUES DU CERCEAU. NOTE ESPECIALLY THE LONG-NECKED GROTESQUES. SECOND HALF SIXTEENTH CENTURY. (See page 116)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE XIII.—CABINET OF THE SCHOOL OF BURGUNDY (SECOND GENERATION), WITH THE SHORT NECKS TYPICAL OF HUGUES SAMBIN'S STYLE. (See page 116)

future conduct of furniture-makers. The *Corporation des Huchiers* (Cabinet-makers' Guild) was born, and quickly rose in importance to that of the older guilds of merchants and craftsmen which had been established throughout Europe in the 12th and 13th centuries, and were closely allied in sentiment to the much older religious guilds. In each of these craft-guilds there were three "ranks," that of apprentice, that of journeyman, and that of passed-master, the last rank alone having the right to sell goods. Before reaching that stage, young men desirous of becoming cabinet-makers had to serve an apprenticeship of six years, which included a year or two of travelling to other countries as "journeymen-apprentices," in order to familiarize themselves with the designs and working methods of other nations than their own. At the end of the six years, the journeyman might make application for mastership, whereupon he underwent an examination before a selected jury of disinterested Masters of the Guild, that is to say, including neither his own master nor any relation of the latter, nor of himself or wife. The young applicant was given a complicated piece of furniture to execute, and the task was chosen in such a way as to test the candidate's skill in every branch of his art. He was locked up alone in a work-

shop until he had completed his task, in order to prevent him from obtaining outside assistance or advice, just as the candidates for the French *Prix de Rome* in art or music are locked up to this very day, for the same reason.

If the journeyman's work was considered satisfactory by the jury, he was admitted as a "Passed Master," while his trial-piece was called his "masterpiece," a word which has acquired too loose a significance in these less rigorously honest days of craftsmanship. He then took oath to offer for sale nothing but work of the finest quality, both in execution and material, under penalty of having inferior work publicly burned in front of his workshop, as well as of a heavy fine, not to speak of the risk of expulsion from the corporation for disloyalty to its fundamental precepts. At the same time, other rules were formulated as to the form, and weight, and detail, of most of the principal objects of furniture in use at the time, which, however, as we have already stated, were confined to stools, benches, chairs, credences, tables, beds, and of course the ubiquitous chests or "*bahuts*" from which the name of the corporation itself, that of the *Huchiers*, is derived by corruption through the word "*bahutiers*" or *bahut*-makers.

CHAPTER III

FURNITURE OF THE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

Just as the Gothic spirit was a glorious evanescent blaze which developed slowly out of the smoldering ruins of the mighty Roman and Eastern empires, and, for three centuries, illumined all Europe with its jewelled windows, soaring pinnacles, delicate traceries and its lofty ideals, so the Renaissance might be likened unto a phoenix of unbelievable beauty and divine strength, arising resplendent from the ashes of that Gothic spirit which had temporarily consumed it, and possessed of all the protean qualities with which the ancients endowed the Assyrian wonder-bird. The Renaissance was more than the Revival of Learning,—into which anglicism the French word for "rebirth" has been transplanted,—and which has all the defects and the qualities of any catch-word or catch-phrase. It meant "all things to all men," not only literally, but positively. Scientists and artists, men of letters and men of God, alike, found in the new spirit—for it was indeed like an intoxicating spirit engen-

dered by the all-enveloping ether—the truths to which their specially-trained minds were drawn.

None can tell how, or why, Italy, in the 13th century, absorbed this divine essence; yet it found its way into the souls of all—into those of the common people as into those of the wealthy and powerful nobles—and bred that liberty of thought and the free expression thereof, bred it in a thousand forms, which are so much an integral part of our lives today, that we marvel at mankind having been able to exist without it for so long. The early Middle Ages were, in truth, but a continuation of the Dark Ages. For ten centuries even the thinkers among men wandered aimlessly through the maze of ecclesiastical scholasticism and dogma, while the less intellectually-inclined simply believed all they were told, in a sort of stunned wonder that creatures, so worthless and wicked, so full of sin and of so little value in the sight of God, should be permitted to exist at all. Rare, indeed, were the venturesome spirits who saw "beyond the darkness," and risked torture and death in defence of their principles and theories, with that magnificent disregard of their own safety and comfort, indeed of all but the dissemination of their newly-discovered truths, which is the appanage of the truly great alone.

From the 9th to the end of the 12th century, there was a period of almost complete stagnation in the realm of thought. The feudalism under which humanity groaned, which permitted no liberty of expression, nor even of intimate thought, where the monks were the sole instructors of those who wished to learn, choked all efforts to pierce the intellectual fog in which men staggered blindly, and the result was an almost complete brutalization of the better side of mankind. This does not mean that in the Middle Ages there were no great intellects trying to break through the obscurity, else the world's treasury would never have been enriched with the works of such men as the two Moslem philosophers, Avicenna (980-1037) and Averroës (1126-1198); as Abelard (1079-1142), fearless and progressive teacher, and the immortal lover of the brilliant Heloïse, his pupil; as Roger Bacon (c. 1214-1294), intellectually far ahead of his time; as St. Thomas Aquinas (1227-1274) the "Angelic Doctor" and most brilliant of Church debaters, who openly acknowledged Plato and more especially Aristotle, as *the* masters of philosophy;* or as Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), greatest of all Italian poets, if not indeed the

** In early pictures of St. Thomas Aquinas enthroned, Plato and Aristotle are invariably included. (See de Bles' "How to Distinguish the Saints in Art," pp. 121 and 131.)*

greatest of all since Homer, and whose "Divine Comedy" closed, as it were, with a curtain of light, the sombre portals of the Middle Ages, leaving the way clear for a Petrarch and a Boccaccio. All these men, and others too numerous to mention here, saw the necessity of a more widely-spread instruction in the things of this world to take the place of the blind superstitious beliefs then prevalent. Discoveries of all sorts, from the natural phenomena of earth and the heavens to that of the American continent, were children of this wonderful awakening, and the invention of the printing press and movable type by Gutenberg in the middle of the 15th century enabled the philosophers and scientists of the day to spread, broadcast, the results of their intellectual labors, so that they could be reached by the less-instructed masses. The invention of gunpowder was also an enormous factor in freeing Europe from a well-established yoke—the heavily-armored chivalry of feudalism—for the usefulness of the mounted knight in battle died away when the long-bow and arrow gave place to musket and shot. Feudal castles, strongholds of those who would hold the people in ignorant subjection, also had lived their day, and, finally, in the 14th century, that other great invention, the mariner's compass, enabled adventurous spirits to

discover that this globe of ours was not so narrowly bounded as had hitherto been believed. As Professor Jebb says, "The Renaissance, in the largest sense of the word, was the whole process of transition in Europe from the medieval to the modern order."

Now in art, to cut a long story short, one of the earlier manifestations of the Renaissance was the study of the literary classics of Greece and Rome, while from that study proceeded an interest in the monuments of the great epochs in the history of those nations. The Gothic age had died out through inanition. The sturdy edifices of the 13th and 14th centuries had degenerated in the 15th into graceful, but unstable, skeletons of stone, overladen with ornament, their strength impaired by the incessant lightening of the supports, and, finally, by the debasement into mere decoration of the two main constructional features of Gothic architecture: the pointed arch and the flying buttress. So, in conjunction with the desire to finish at once with a moribund order, the new-born love of classic monuments brought back an ancient architectural style,—modified. Moreover, as Byzantium, or Constantinople, besieged by the Moslem, drew near to her end (1453) as the great Christian empire of the east, her scholars fled westward to Venice and Sicily, just as Greek

adventurers had done centuries earlier, thence making their way south and north, respectively, toward the city which already was in the forefront of the new movement, *viz.:* Florence. Constantinople for a long time had been the sole repository of what remained of the Greek classics, and these scholars took with them to Italy all they could transport in the way of ancient manuscripts. Thus it came about that the artistic rebirth of the world reached Italy first and gained so powerful a hold upon that country that she retained the undisputed supremacy at least until the beginning of the 17th century.

It made its appearance in Italy in a curious manner. With a magnificent disregard for the grandiose ruins of ancient Rome, which is paralleled, in modern history, only by Japan's desire, after the revolution of 1868, to destroy or otherwise do away with the monuments of the past to make room for occidental improvements, the "gothicistic" architects of the Eternal City had used the great stone blocks still lying about in the old squares, not as models of architectural style and ornament, but simply as *stone*, more easily obtained than by digging it out of the quarries themselves. But in 1403, the young Brunelleschi, visiting Rome, was dismayed at this vandalism, and succeeded in putting an end to it. He

subsequently searched for and studied these ancient fragments with so much assiduity that the populace of Rome believed he was searching for lost jewels and buried coin. The treasures he discovered were those of a great art, and it was not many years before he was able to reap the reward of his foresight and industry.

In 1418, the Signoria of Florence offered a prize for the best plans of a dome to be erected on the Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, and the judges, out of fifteen drawings submitted, chose Brunelleschi's. In collaboration with Ghiberti, he completed his task in 1436, thus having the honor of having constructed the first great dome of the Renaissance.

Now this revival of the Greek and Roman feeling in architecture manifested itself not only by the adoption of the general lines of the classic structures, but even of all their details and ornaments.

The five classical orders of architecture, three Greek (Doric, Ionic and Corinthian) and two Roman (Tuscan and Composite) of which the Tuscan was a romanized Doric, once more came into their own, and since that time, in spite of minor modifications and a sporadic revival of the gothic style for ecclesiastical buildings, have never been dislodged from

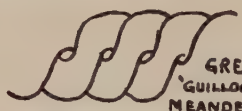
public favor. Pilasters, which are flat rectangular columns placed against the walls, with the same general features as the round columns of their order, also came in, and are a frequently employed form of decoration in furniture of the Italian and, to a lesser degree, French Renaissance styles.

And, instead of the naturalistic plants that adorned Gothic buildings, we find in Renaissance architecture and furniture purely conventional designs such as the Greek fret, often comprising a continuous swastika, or *filfot;* the meander, or *guilloche*, in numerous forms; the egg-and-dart, tongue-and-dart, leaf-and-tongue, and egg-and-leaf motives; the Greek antefix; various combinations of beads; the running ornament, conventionalisation of a breaking wave; and, finally, the broad band of laurel, or bay, leaves, either simple, or with a ribbon crossing it diagonally. All these patterns are found everywhere in the mouldings of Renaissance architecture and such pieces of furniture as still were architectural in design, and in picture frames or those surrounding the beautiful high-relief statuary of such men as the Della Robbias, Donatello, Rossellino, Mino da Fiesole, always in the mouldings. The Greek fret and the running ornament, or *postes*, as it is called in French, appear as a frieze in strictly classical de-

Plate V.

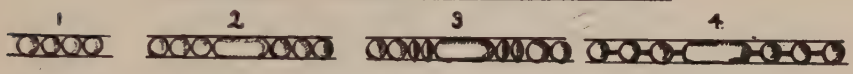
Greek & Roman Motives used by the Artists of the Renaissance.

Two of the Numerous Greek Fret Patterns



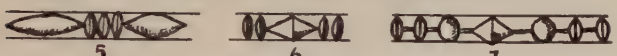
Greek "Guilloche" or Meander in its Purest and most Common Form

Greek & Roman Bead-, or Pearl Ornaments.



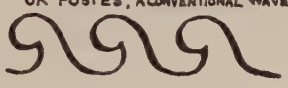
Above:- 1. Beads or Pearls. 2. Pearls & Olive. 3. Pearls, Pastres & Olive. 4. Pearl & Baton.

Below: Greek Variants of the Above Roman Forms.



"Torus" or Bay-leaf Garland

Greek Running Ornament or "Postes", a Conventional Wave.



Antipix.

Classical Molding Ornaments.

Tongue & Dart | Egg & Dart | Egg & Leaf | Tongue & Leaf | Dª

Greek Facade showing flat triangular pediment (1); entablature (2) composed of cornice (a) frieze (b) and architrave (c); and the six Doric capitals (3)

signs of architectural form, while the *torus* is used chiefly as part of the base of a column, the cornice of a room, on mirror frames or as a half-round moulding on furniture. (The chief motives are shown on Plate V.)

But Brunelleschi and his successors were too great artists to imitate slavishly the models of classical antiquity. They used them in an adapted form, freer from stiffness, though at times, as, for example, in their treatment of cornices, not always in as perfect proportions as were those in the temples and palaces of the ancient days.

As we pointed out in the preceding chapter, all early furniture, with some rare exceptions, was architectural both in form and ornament, and of all styles there is, perhaps, none which is so difficult to attribute accurately, as to place of origin, as Italian Renaissance.* In France and England, as a rule, there existed only one style at one time, and the

**And to make identification still more difficult we have very few "basic" pieces upon which definitely to establish the peculiarities of the styles of each province, still less of each city. This attribution to individual cities in the Apennine peninsula, which is employed only too frequently in sales catalogues, is almost entirely arbitrary and, even at its best, likely to be fixed by some piece found in the city of which the name is used as an attribution.*

Such arbitrary attributions,—with rare exceptions, e.g., *Lucca silhouetted pieces, Florentine* cassapancas, *Venetian* gesso *furniture,—are misleading to the purchaser at auction sales, for it is quite obvious that for the past 300 years Italian furniture has been carried from one part of the country to another, so that the place of its presence today may have no bearing whatsoever upon that of its origin.*

few variations of such styles that emanated from provincial workshops were so unimportant as only to merit attention because they sometimes appear to

FIG. 17.

be out of their dates, and thus constitute a serious puzzle to all but the keenly-observant student. Such modifications as are found were usually personal to the individual cabinet-maker, and had no effect on

the evolution of the style itself. With Italian Renaissance furniture, however, the great variety of styles produced in the different parts of the peninsula proceeded from political and social conditions prevalent in the last century of the Middle Ages and the first of the "modern" centuries, that is to say, the 13th to the 16th. From early feudal times, Italy had been divided into several large provinces—indicated on the accompanying map (Fig. 17)—of which the principal ones, so far as our subject is concerned, were Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria, Venetia and Emilia in the North, and Tuscany, the Marches, Umbria, and Rome, in central Italy.

Moreover, each important city was an independent and complete entity, which throve—or writhed—under the firm hand of powerful rulers, who were called "tyrants," and who were their absolute masters, in the most autocratic sense of the word. So it was that each city, through the character of its people, and its connections and struggles with the outside world, developed its own peculiarities in art, quite as much in furniture as in architecture and painting.

Now of these "tyrants" some claimed hereditary rights to the throne of their principalities, on the ground that their ancestors had possessed these

thrones for so long that they had come to look upon the possession of them as a right, *e.g.*, the dukes of Savoy, Ferrara and Montferrat, the Montefeltri of Urbino, the Malatesta of Rimini—famous in romance—and the Ordelaffi of Forli. Others were title-bearers (Vicars) under the Holy Roman Empire, such as the brilliant, but infamous, Visconti of Milan, and the Della Scala family of Verona. Again, many of the tyrants came from the class of successful military chieftains such as the Gonzaghi of Mantua —ever munificent and discerning patrons of the arts—and the Carraresi of Padua. These latter bore the proud title of "Podestà." Others, such as the celebrated *condottiere* Francesco Sforza, who ruled Milan after the downfall of the Visconti, were also leaders of men, soldiers. Still another class of tyrants, of despots, comprised nephews or illegitimate sons of the popes, of which the most notorious were the astute and cruel Cesare Borgia of the Romagna, the Farnese of Parma, and the Della Rovere of Urbino, related to Popes Alexander VI, Paul III, and Sixtus IV, respectively. The famous Julius II, patron of Michelangelo and Raphael, was also a Della Rovere.

But perhaps the most influential or, at least, the most firmly-established category of city rulers con-

sisted of wealthy burghers and merchants who either bought their cities from nobles hard-pressed for ready money, or who gradually rose to supreme power through judicious distribution of their own great wealth. The first and foremost of these were the Medici of Florence and the Bentivogli of Bologna. The former came into power in Florence in 1434 with Cosimo, *Pater Patriae* (father of his country), as he was called. From humble beginnings, with none of the priceless advantages that noble birth gave in those times, the Medici family came to rule supreme in Florence, as great commoners, during the life time of Cosimo, and of Lorenzo the Magnificent (*Il Magnifico*), his grandson. But they were expelled after the shameful surrender of Florence to the French king, Charles VIII, by the weak and profligate Piero, only to be restored and re-expelled, and again restored, within thirty years, and finally elevated to the rank of Hereditary Grand Dukes of Tuscany by Pope Pius V in 1569. This great family of merchants gave two famous popes to christendom: the brilliant and erudite Leo X, and Clement VII, while two of its daughters, Catherine and Marie de Medici, achieved the incredible distinction—for those times—of occupying the throne of France and bearing sons who ruled as kings over that country,

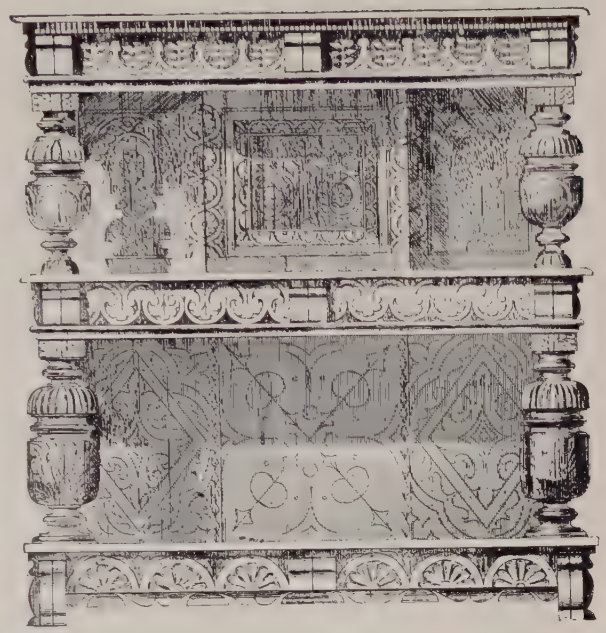


PLATE XVIII, a.—ELIZABETHAN COURT-CUPBOARD (c. 1570) DERIVED FROM XVIII, b. (See page 159)

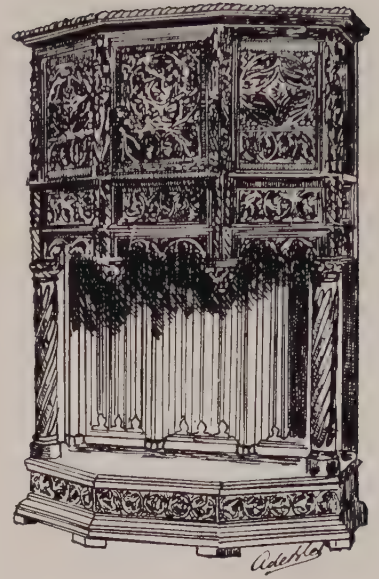


PLATE XVIII, b. — GOTHIC CREDENCE THE ANCESTOR OF XVIII, a. (See page 159)

PLATE XIX, a.—BLACK-AND-GOLD LACQUER CABINET ON A SILVERED STAND IN THE STYLE OF GRINLING GIBBONS. (See page 170)

PLATE XIX, b.—LACQUER CABINET ON A FRANCO-DUTCH DANIEL MAROT TYPE STAND. STYLE OF EARLY WILLIAM-AND-MARY. (See page 170)

"the eldest daughter of the Church." The influence of the Medici, particularly of the first Cosimo and Lorenzo, in Florence, and of Pope Leo X in Rome, can hardly be exaggerated in the realm of the arts and letters, and might be said to be the direct cause of the great place held by Florence in the midst of all the remarkable activity along similar lines throughout Italy. Only the Montefeltri of Urbino, the Sforzi of Milan—the patrons of Leonardo da Vinci—and the Gonzaghi of Mantua can be compared with the earlier Medici for their intelligent patronage of the arts and of men of letters of their day, and it was largely due to the sincere interest that these enlightened rulers took in the new movement that it spread so rapidly all over modern Europe.

Florence, heart of the great province of Tuscany, throve under the firm hand of the Medici to such a degree that its revenues exceeded at one time those of the kingdoms of England and Ireland combined, under that very sagacious ruler, Queen Elizabeth. It became the financial centre of the world—Edward III of England had already borrowed large sums of money from Florentine bankers in the 14th century —and no less than eighty banks handled the commercial drafts of great enterprises scattered throughout

Europe and Asia Minor, while the wool industry of Florence was so important that, at one time, eighty thousand workmen were employed in it, and the manufactured goods represented the enormous sum, for those days, of twelve and a half million dollars yearly.

It is, therefore, not surprising that the nobles and merchants of the Tuscan capital should have vied with one another in patronising prominent architects and artists, and in building magnificent palaces, which they afterward filled with handsome furniture. So it came to pass that Florentine architecture and house furnishings of the 15th century, like Florentine pictures, represent the loftiest expression of the Renaissance spirit.

Just, as, in literature, Florence produced a Dante and a Boccaccio, wielding an incalculable influence upon Italian progress through their adoption of the native language, instead of using the customary Latin, so, in painting, she gave birth to such innovators as Giotto and Masaccio, to Paolo Uccello—the father of perspective,—and Luca Signorelli, who was the first to make a serious study of anatomy as applied to art; to Botticelli and the unique Leonardo da Vinci; while, in sculpture, she produced such masters as Lorenzo Ghiberti—of the splendid bronze

gates of the Baptistery—Donatello, Luca and Andrea della Robbia, Benedetto da Majano, Verrocchio and finally Michelangelo himself, titan of titans. In architecture, Brunelleschi, as we have seen, created a new style, or, rather, revived with new elements of vitality the splendors of the classic style of Rome,—the dome of the Pantheon—while Cronaca built the famous Strozzi and Rucellai palaces, which are typical of the Renaissance style at its best.

Now Renaissance, indeed all early, furniture was, we repeat, mainly architectural, not only in form but even in detail, to such an extent that the fronts of large pieces of the 15th and 16th centuries, such as cabinets, *credenze*, resemble in almost every respect the façades of the great palaces of the time, with portals, columns and pilasters, arches and balconies, the whole crowned by complete entablatures —cornice, frieze and architrave,—in close adaptation of the classical orders. Above all, the Florentines appear to have possessed a remarkably pure and instinctive good taste in matters of proportion in art. Instead of vast fortunes being expended in overloading their palaces with ostentatious and costly furniture, as was done in Venice, and also in Rome, the fine, large rooms were made to appear even more

grandiose by keeping all the big furniture ranged along the walls, with little in the middle of the room, at most an octagonal or hexagonal table generally on a carved tripod foot, standing lamps of wrought strap-iron, and finely carved stools. All the large seats were wall-pieces, *sgabelli* (Fig. 18) and X-shaped chairs being employed when movable seats were required. These X-shaped chairs were an adaptation of the Roman *curule*, and were designed in two forms: the Dantesca and the so-called Savonarola. The Savonarola chair was always constructed of interlaced staves arranged so that it could be folded into a small space and be stowed out of sight. It was more graceful, less stocky, than the Dantesca chair, a heavier type which had only the back and front semi-circular X's with a connecting bar as a back. (Plate VI, a and b.) The *sgabello* was a stool with a back added

Fig. 18.

to it. The backs and panel-supports were often decorated in extremely handsome design. In the banqueting hall they stood grouped around the large fixed table; their richness of ornamentation being toned down by the dimensions of the great room which tended to dwarf them. French *sgabello*-type seats have three or four turned legs, placed at a rakish angle to the seat—like those of a Windsor chair—instead of the Italian panel-supports.

As in the Gothic era, chests were the principal article of furniture from the 14th to the 16th century and were used like those of northern Europe as traveling trunks, seats, tables and even as beds. The earlier chests, made for carrying around the country the necessities of the household in those days when inns contained nothing but a rough table or two and a fireplace, were generally simple in construction, strongly bound with strips of wrought-iron, often cut in ornamental designs, and in most cases decorated with a coat-of-arms for identification. Some of these chests betray a strong Gothic influence—after the Cistercian monks from Burgundy took the "free style" to Italy in the late 12th century—but, in the minds of the Italians, the Gothic spirit never blended thoroughly with their inherent taste for classical purity. Therefore, although there was at

first a Gothic feeling in the general outline, we find comparatively little of the magnificent tracery that embellished the northern specimens of Gothic furniture, and Renaissance artists decorated their pieces, instead, with paintings, or *intarsia*, *gesso*, *certosina*, or *pastiglia* compositions (Plate VII, a) until in the Cinquecento, the chest having become a more stable, less mobile, piece of furniture, the wood itself was handsomely carved and other forms of decoration were abandoned. The *cassone*, or wedding chest, in which the trousseau was presented to the daughter of a wealthy family, naturally took on added importance from this custom, and presently it became the chief object of furnishing in the houses of the rich. In Florence particularly it was considered of so much value that descriptions of fine examples take up more space in the inventories of great palaces than those of any other form of furniture, and this is scarcely to be wondered at when we consider that many of the most famous artists of the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento were employed to paint the panels of these *cassoni* for the weddings of such high-born ladies as Lucrezia Tornabuoni and her sister, Ludovica; the Albizzi girls, or the erudite Isabella d'Este, who, married to the duke of Mantua, was one of the most brilliant and distinguished

women of the Renaissance epoch. Sano di Pietro, Botticelli, Pesellino, Andrea del Sarto, Piero di Cosimo, Luca Signorelli, all painted masterpieces on the fronts and sides of Florentine *cassoni*, and indeed some of the best-known pictures by these masters, now hanging in the galleries of Europe and America, are simply such panels taken out and framed. (Plate VII, b). The Metropolitan Museum of Art has several, two by Piero di Cosimo—hunting scenes; one by Botticelli—the "Miracles of St. Zenobius," made for a church vestment chest—; a couple by Pesellino, and many others. Later, toward the middle of the Cinquecento, famous sculptors were as willing to design wedding chests as had been the earlier painters to adorn them, and there are extant several examples said to have been executed after the drawings of Michelangelo, or Sansovino, the Venetian.

Many of these *cassoni* can be given an exact date, in the same manner as that which determined the date of the Gothic chest described in the previous chapter. This date can be ascertained either by the study of the two coats-of-arms, which as the chests were frequently "pre-wedding" presents, were then not divided vertically nor quartered on one shield, but emblazoned separately at each end of the front panel, as on a *cassone* front, in the Metropolitan

Museum, by Sano di Pietro (1406-1481) of Siena, which bears the coats of the Luci family of Florence, on the left, and the Spannochi of Siena on the right. By the laws of heraldry, the left of a shield, as seen by another, is the right (dexter) side as held by its owner and is the stronger or male position. Therefore, the piece of furniture of which this panel was a part, was made for the marriage of a Luci scion with a daughter of the house of Spannochi. Old documents in the *Libreria* of Siena would give the exact date of this marriage. In a later carved chest (Fig. 22), described in the next chapter, we have demonstrated how the date can again be placed by the coat-of-arms, where both armorial bearings are placed on the same shield, divided "per pale," as the expression goes.

Care must be exercised in the matter of any furniture distinguished by coats-of-arms, for, obviously, they give a special interest to such pieces which may be employed as a lure by the unscrupulous maker of spurious wares. So, before purchasing any such furniture, it would be well to read or have read the bearings which mark it, and see whether they correspond in date and style to those of the furniture itself. In some frankly faked pieces, the heraldry itself is incorrect, for the "faker," being usually

ignorant of the science of blazonry, commits palpable errors. Or he knows that his prospective client is no more acquainted with it than he is himself, and thus in a large measure feels protected against the risk of detection.

When chests began to appear of insufficient comfort as seats—their height and their narrower, moulded tops making them no longer available as such—a large bench of classic design, which was simply a long, low, *bahut* with arms and a low back, placed on a slightly raised platform, took their place along the walls of the Florentine palaces. The *Cassapanca*, or chest-bench, was purely a Florentine article of furniture. It was superbly monumental in outline, massively constructed, and, particularly in later days, ornamented with great restraint as befitted its position against the wall. Some, however, were elaborately carved with coats-of-arms and figures in high relief, but such pieces were extremely rare.

Now, the Florentines were accustomed to give magnificent *fêtes* on special occasions, and while the furniture generally was classical and simple in outline and ornamentation, that of the reception room, and especially the throne-room, was as magnificent as it could be made. The principal piece was the *trono* (throne) itself, upon which the master of the

household sat with his wife to receive guests. The Filippo Strozzi throne (Fig. 19) and that of the famous Giuliano dei Medici are noteworthy examples of the splendor which prevailed in the houses of

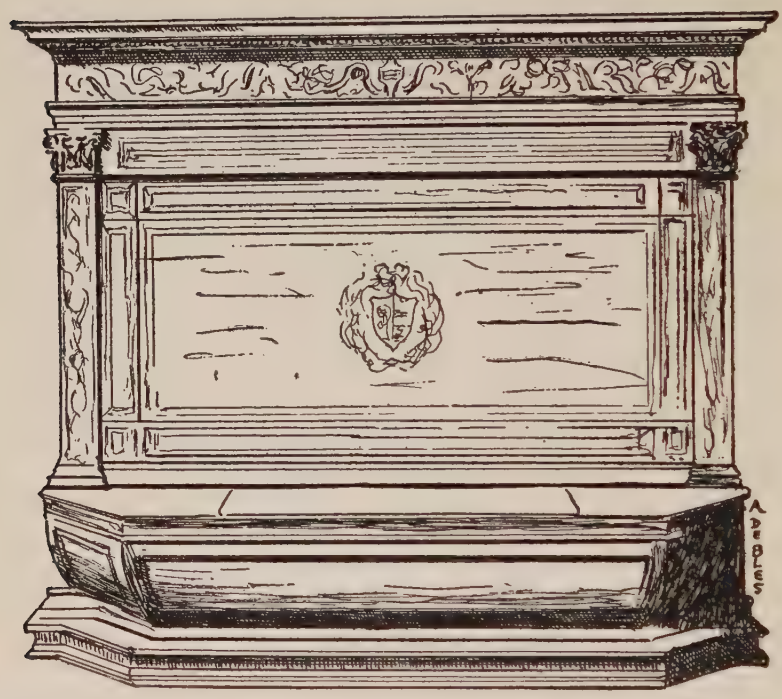


FIG. 19.—THE FAMOUS STROZZI "TRONO" IN THE ROTHSCHILD (PARIS) COLLECTION.

the great nobles in 16th century Florence. Yet their regal style and dignity were not derived from undue magnificence or display, but from the superb simplicity of the main features, *viz.*, the fluted pilasters,

the classic entablatures, the fine modelling; and from that instinctive sense of correct proportions which is so typical of the arts and literature of Tuscany as compared with other parts of Italy, particularly Venice and Lombardy, as we shall demonstrate in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

FURNITURE OF THE LATE ITALIAN RENAISSANCE

It is one of the peculiarities of Italian art of all kinds, both in the Quattrocento and the Cinquecento, that, unlike Greek art, there was no general resemblance in its manifestations as produced in the different provinces and city-states into which the peninsula was divided. The spirit pervading the art of Greece was an ardent patriotism which expressed itself by exalting the Hellenic ideal and employing it as a "cultural weapon" throughout the numerous colonies, *e.g.*, *magna grecia*, the Chalcidice and the Hellespont and those on the Euxine coast. The Italian city-states—as for that matter did such cities as Athens and Sparta—lived in a state of incessant and bitter rivalry, but here it stifled, to a great extent, those influences which might have made Italian art as homogeneous as Egyptian or Greek art, and, to a slightly lesser degree, that of Rome.

So it came about that each city-state established and maintained its own individual traditions, not

only in the graphic arts, but also in the applied arts of architecture and furniture. And, although Florence was only thirty-three miles away from Siena, as the crow flies, the influence of the City of the Lilies upon her rival was practically non-existent. In the

Fig. 20.—A Hexagonal-top Table Assigned to Florence.

Trecento and the Quattrocento, when Sienese art was at its prime, brilliancy of decoration took precedence over the feeling for form, ever the chief Florentine preoccupation. In painting, tenderness of expression in the midst of delicate shades of reds and blues and yellows, heightened by a lavish use of gold-leaf, gave to the Sienese altar-pieces a

charm that one looks for in vain in the more powerful works of contemporary Florence.

And so it was in furniture design. In Florence, the architecture and, consequently, the furniture of the 14th and the 15th centuries—once the transitory Gothic influence had died away—were severe in form, keeping close to the classic model with its columns and pilasters, acanthus leaves and friezes, and the moulding ornaments inherited from Rome, while the furniture of Siena was more richly decorated and the classical forms modified to attune to the less virile art sense of her people. There was not much difference between the furniture styles of the two rival cities, so far as the type of furniture used was concerned. Even the Florentine "throne" was found, although rarely, in Siena. One of the finest known is that in the *Kunstgewerbe Museum* in Berlin, a late piece dating about 1522-25, with richly carved friezes and scrolled pilasters and a high-paneled back, with an *ovolo* moulding, instead of the *intarsia* paneling of the *Strozzi trono.* (Fig. 19.) The back is higher than that of the Florentine "thrones," which were approximately as broad as they were high. And although the architectural feeling remains well established, the cornice projects considerably over the back stiles—which are capped

by an elaborately-carved frieze—and is upheld by an acanthus bracket, or console, at each end. Two large acanthus brackets support the beautiful moulded and carved pilasters, with their fern-frond and acanthus (composite order) capitals, while below the brackets hang swags of be-ribboned flowers and fruit, which possibly were the inspiration for those "swags" we associate with the English 17th century wood-carver, Grinling Gibbons. A Sienese table in the *Kaiser-Friedrich Museum* in Berlin, dating from about the middle of the 16th century, has a richly-moulded hexagonal top, supported on a large, square, paneled column, with an inverted entablature for a base, and a lion's paw at each corner, while another, formerly in the Tolentino collection, has a similar pedestal except that the column expands considerably toward the top and there are no paws below the square entablature-shaped base. Another one, labeled Florentine, in the same collection, has an octagonal top resting on four scrolled supports placed cornerwise upon a square pedestal, with sarcophagus base, the pedestal forming a cupboard or cabinet, with human half-figures (grotesques) at either side of each square moulded panel. The panel supporters of the long tables again show the gentler feeling of Siena in the line of the profile curves,

smoother than those of the Florentine pieces, while the stretcher is less severe, and in an elongated baluster, form.

Sienese *credenze* were usually in three compartments, simpler in this instance than Florentine pieces of the same period, *viz.*, the middle of the Cinquecento, and which generally had only two doors, or four, in pairs. The doors were simply moulded and, both in general form and detail of ornamentation, were rectangular, whereas the Florentine examples were much more elaborate in outline as in ornamentation of the door panels and stiles. Here it is the Florentine pieces that have the projecting top supported on acanthus consoles, but the purity of the architectural entablature has disappeared. The decorative work, particularly the exquisite relief carving, of Sienese furniture, was influenced by such men as Marrina and Barile, whose friezes and designs for upright panels have rarely been surpassed for beauty of conception and execution.

Large cupboards, much higher than *credenze*, with two or four painted doors, were a feature of Sienese houses. Baldassare Peruzzi (1481-1537), the celebrated architect of the great Farnesina Palace, built for the Sienese banker, Chigi, did not consider it beneath his dignity to paint the panels

PLATE XX.—GLASTONBURY CHAIR. THE FORE-RUNNER OF THE WAINSCOT CHAIR. (See page 176)

PLATE XXI.—TWO WAINSCOT CHAIRS DATING C. 1620 AND 1630. THE CHAIR ON THE LEFT IS THE EARLIER IN STYLE WITH ITS HORIZONTAL ARMS AND LOWER STRETCHER IN SPITE OF THE LATER CRESTING. (See page 179)

of such pieces. Peruzzi resembled Leonardo da Vinci in versatility, if not in degree of artistry, and wielded a strong influence over all 16th century Sienese and Umbrian art, for he was at once an architect and a mathematician, a master of perspective, a sculptor, a painter, and an authority on classical design.

Fig. 21.

Other parts of Tuscany produced more distinctly typical pieces than did Siena, but they were regular in execution, and their design was more in the form of silhouette outlining than in relief or ornamentation. A table of Lucca workmanship (Fig. 21), is typical. The tables of Lucca were constructed of thick wood, cut with a band-saw into simple yet harmonious scrolls and curves. Elaborately-cut outline seems to have been the one and only aim of the Lucca artisans, indeed, although to a lesser degree, perhaps, of all

Tuscan workers, not claimed by Florence and Siena. A point worthy of recollection in regard to the cabinets and *credenze* is the frequent use of the so-called Tuscan column, which is nothing more than an unfluted Doric, with a moulded base. Wherever these columns—so characteristic again of the French style of Henri II (1547-59)—are found as corner supports, or otherwise, in Italian furniture, it is safe to label the piece as Tuscan, as distinct from Florentine, in which fluted pilasters were practically constant, until carved caryatids replaced them; or from Siena where decorative panel pilasters were mostly employed. A fine *credenza*, formerly in the Cavaliere Girard collection, incorrectly labeled Florentine, has these Tuscan columns in niches at the two front corners, although the doors are flanked by half-figure caryatids.

Umbrian art, in furniture as in painting, was an offshoot or, to put it more exactly, the logical development of Sienese. Siena never moved in art from her original position of the great stronghold of the Byzantine tradition, and her sensitiveness to sensual beauty, rather than to intellectual strength, as exhibited in form, prevented her development, so that by the end of the Quattrocento it had caused her elimination as a factor in Italian art. But when

Umbria took up the Sienese tradition, it did not spring from a root grafting, as Sienese art had grafted itself onto the foundations of the Byzantine tradition. It built a new growth from the upper branches and reached forth into new realms with such effectiveness that it could produce a Raphael, "purest painter of them all," direct descendant of Siena, through his master and friend, Perugino, in whom the gentleness of Sienese art is so clearly discernible.

There is little Umbrian furniture that can be attributed with certainty to that province, for much of that which is found there was made by the Sienese artists for the Perugians and the inhabitants of other cities around them. Siena and Umbria were mostly on friendly terms, and so there was none of that bitter feeling between them which did so much to arrest the development of the southern Tuscan city, by its inhibitions against its powerful, because progressive, neighbor on the Arno. Umbrian pieces of whose identity one is quite certain—and they are rare—show great naïveté in their design, and are distinctly lacking in originality. We remember one typical piece, a 16th century cabinet which has two door panels, two side panels, and a middle top-drawer front decorated with nothing but a flat relief carving

of baluster form running down the centre. The sides were broadly chamfered, and flanking the doors were two almost rudely-carved female half-figures draped below the waist with an acanthus leaf, and supported on . . . nothing. Another cabinet with two cupboards and two drawers above the entablature has three enormous curled leaves, with parallel sides, as stiles, a similar motive in lozenge form in the centre of the door panels, and a wearisome repetition of ornament in the excessively elaborate mouldings. Umbria made a constant use of that very displeasing motive, the horizontal fluting. It is out of place in that position, and cannot be carried out to its proper solution, so that it becomes a sort of "channeling" at both ends. Its frequency, and that of the ugly large parallel-sided leaves, are evidences of the poverty of invention which characterized late Sienese and Umbrian furniture design.

Now, before going north into the provinces of Lombardy, Piedmont and Venetia, let us see what was occurring in Rome in the matter of house furnishings. In view of the enormous importance given to the Eternal City, as the main residence of the popes, and of the further fortunate factor that these popes almost all were imbued either with a sincere desire to promote the arts for art's sake, or the honor

of Rome, or with a selfish thought of the magnification of their own glory, it is not surprising that all the leading artists of Italy swept on to the city of the Caesars, where splendid palaces and churches were constantly being erected and decorated with frescoes and statues by the greatest men that could be found for the work. With Michelangelo and Raphael and Benvenuto Cellini, and scores of other great, though lesser, masters,—in the employ of such enlightened and cultured rulers as the Medici popes, Leo X and Clement VII, and the Della Rovere, Julius II,—designing furniture, it is not to be wondered at that some of the finest pieces extant bear the Roman mark.

The long struggle for supremacy between the Guelphs (supporters of the papacy) and the Ghibellines (supporters of the Holy Roman Empire), which had begun with the famous but unsuccessful bull of Gregory IX ordering Frederick II of Hohenstaufen to submit to the papal authority (1219), had given to the popes a curious sort of morbid desire to impose their authority by the magnificence of their palaces and belongings, by the splendid armor of their large bands of mercenaries, by the brilliancy of their retinues and the lavishness of their expenditures. And in those days of a highly-cultured Italy,

patronage of the arts was one of the safest and surest methods of obtaining what we should call today "advantageous publicity." Therefore, we find that Roman palaces and their furnishings were much more ornate and "showy" than those of the more sincerely artistic Florence, although in general form and style there is a strong resemblance, owing to the fact that a large proportion of Roman pieces was designed and executed by Florentine artists. We know from the famous *Memoirs* of Benvenuto Cellini and Michelangelo, two of the glories of Florence, how their souls revolted against some of the orders that were given to them, and to which social conditions of the time forced them to conform, although not always without protests and struggles, and even punishments. The pride of the papacy had to find its expression, and its purpose had to be served, regardless of the feelings of the artist employed, be he a genius or no. So we find Roman furniture elaborately embellished with close carving in high relief, magnificent, it must be confessed, both in design and execution, but lacking that chaste restraint which is so essentially a feature of pure art, and so typical of Florence, the very home of the Medici—before they became popes. Michelangelo and Raphael not only designed but also supervised the execution of such

important pieces as the *cassone*, always the article of furniture *par excellence* in 14th-16th century Italian mansions. It is, therefore, not astonishing that the drawing of the human figures which were used so extensively in Roman wood-carving was quasi-perfect and that these high-relief pieces have a character quite distinct from those produced in other parts of the peninsula, notably Venice, of which we shall

FIG. 22.—CARVED CASSONE.

speak later. The fine *cassone* (Fig. 22) with two beautifully-wrought figures of Spring and Summer flanking the impaled arms of Bentivoglio and Sforza is a Roman piece. The pose of the figures, the cornucopia and sheaves, the palmetto frieze and the well-formed, curly-headed *putti* are characteristic of Cinquecento Rome. It offers a good example of the way in which fashions in furniture spread in Italy as elsewhere, and also of how an exact date may

often be placed on a piece of furniture by an observant connoisseur. Bentivoglio was the "tyrant" of Bologna, while this particular Sforza, Bosio by name, was count of Santa Fiora in Tuscany. Yet the latter went to Roman artists, instead of to nearby Siena or to Florence for the important *cassoni* required for the marriage of his daughter to Count Gianfrancesco Bentivoglio, in 1540. The condition of the lion's-paw feet explains why so many Florentine and other chests were designed in sarcophagus form with its "refused" base, to prevent damage by constant kicking.

Another chest like our illustration, one in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, bearing arms of the Delphini, also with *putti* supporters on a square panel, is divided into four inset bas-relief panels, three of which represent allegorical subjects exquisitely carved, and the fourth, a trophy of arms. It is in a modified sarcophagus form, resting on four lion's-paw feet turned cornerwise and connected by an apron of reversed scrolls of uncommon design. The corners are embellished with nude and winged female half-figures in high relief on expanding pilasters, while the stiles between each pair of panels are composed of simpler and wingless figures. The frieze again is made up of regular acanthus scrolls and the

palmetto. Chests were not the only form of elaborately carved pieces of Roman furniture. Even the bellows were exquisitely chiselled with allegorical figures and even subjects. In short, sumptuosity was the feature of all Roman furnishings, as it was with those of Venice, but with purer design and more artistic workmanship than was exhibited by the craftsmen of the great Adriatic seaport. The difference between the work of the two cities might be characterized by the term "sculptural" for works designed in Rome, and "decorative" for those produced in Venice.

Furniture in the province of Venetia, and especially in the metropolis itself, suffered many vicissitudes which have seriously affected our complete knowledge of the furnishing of the earlier Venetian houses. The enormous maritime commerce of Venice from the last decade of the 10th century, when the Doge Pietro Orseolo, after the conquest of the Adriatic and Barbary pirates, had established his capital as "Mistress of the Seas," gave to the merchant-patricians such stupendous wealth that, like the French nobles and rich *bourgeoisie* of 17th and 18th century France, they saw no necessity for creating durable furniture. Changing styles frequently, they discarded with each modification of the prevailing

fashion the furniture that had gone out of date, to make place for the new style. The old furniture was thrown into attics or broken up, and so we are obliged to have recourse to old inventories for our information as to the arrangement of the palaces in which the great families lived in so regal a splendor. Still more than in Florence were the spacious rooms left bare of anything but the pieces along the side of the walls. To such an extent was this plan carried out that even the smaller writing-tables were often hinged at one end, to permit of them being lifted up and laid against the wall when not in use, while they rested on a wrought-iron support at the unattached end when in service. Such a table is to be seen in Carpaccio's famous picture in the Venice *Accademia*, representing the popular subject,—illustrated by so many great artists, from Dürer to Rembrandt, from Ghirlandajo to Domenichino,—of St. Jerome in his study or cell. This picture also shows another interesting peculiarity of Venetian houses, *viz:* a large shell-topped niche—a typical Renaissance motive—sheltering a statue in the classical manner, in front of which stood a lamp, or a pair of "torchères" (prick-candlesticks). The niche was separated from the room proper by a curtain of tapestry or velvet or brocade. A mirror was almost always hung in this

niche also, and so costly were these mirrors of polished metal, set in magnificent frames, that only in very rare instances is more than one found in inventories of the 15th and 16th centuries. In Florence, and indeed in all parts of Italy except Venice, the rectilinear mirror alone is found, but in the latter city, probably through her early commercial relations with the north of Europe, the convex circular mirror, so well known from its presence in the famous portrait of "Jean Arnolfini and his Wife" by Jan van Eyck in the National Gallery, was frequently used.

The walls of Venetian rooms were hung in the 14th and 15th centuries with Gothic verdure tapestries, that is to say, interspersed with coats-of-arms, and frequently scrolls of script. The tapestries were known as *arras*, from the beautiful city in Flanders —now French—almost totally destroyed in the World War, whence they came. The *arrazzi*—as they were called in Italy—gave place in the 16th century to handsome crimson cut-velvet hangings. Around the walls were low benches, or, more often, chests, which to an even greater extent than in Florence, were by far the most important articles of furniture in the house. The old inventories of the 15th and 16th centuries sometimes show as many as twenty or thirty chests in a house, and the majority of these

were handsomely decorated in the typical Venetian style.

One is not accustomed to think of the famous Venetian patricians—their own name for themselves—as *parvenus*, yet, in numerous respects, they were imbued with all the "qualities" of that amusing section of society. Their love of titles; their pride of race mingled with a highly-developed sense of the power of wealth and of the means of acquiring it; their distrust of each other, as evidenced by the "Lion's Mouth," and the secret denunciations; their cruelty and cold-blooded calculation in crime where *raison d'état* made it desirable or necessary; and above all, their adoption of spurious methods of ornamentation in their art—all these attributes of the Renaissance Venetian's mind betrayed his burgess origin and swift rise to great authority and power. In the chests, for example, instead of the fine *intarsia*, and later the boldly-executed carving of the products of Tuscany and Rome, the ornamentation of Venetian *casse* or *forzier*—they were not called *cassone* in the Venetian dialect—was effected almost exclusively in *pastiglia* or *gesso*, in intricate scrolls covering the entire chest. Mostly they were in the sarcophagus form on a moulded base, or block feet connected by a scrolled apron, the base as well as the

chest being completely covered with this plaster *rilievo*. An example in the *Kunstgewerbe Museum*, if correctly attributed, is, however, designed in rectilinear contours with three panels divided by friezed pilasters, and bearing a plain laurel wreath in the center. It is on small block feet, without an apron.

Venice, the great mart of Europe, where East and West met and exchanged ideas, was closely connected, both politically and commercially, with the other important provinces of the Italian peninsula, and thus many of the motives in art, and their method of execution, which originally came out of the Orient, found their echo, through Venice, in the other parts of the country. Of such was the characteristic style of inlay known as *certosina* * work, of which the motives and style were directly derived from Saracenic and Persian tiles and chest-decora-

* *A short explanation of the terms,* intarsia, certosina, gesso, *and* pastiglia, *will be of value to the student and tyro collector of Italian antique furniture.*

Intarsia, (*frequently abbreviated to* tarsia), *is inlaid design into the solid, as distinct from veneered, wood of the panel thus decorated. At times it is found in conventional designs, such as the plain checker-board with a border; at others—in* certosina (*q.v.*) *chests—in the same design as the main inlaid ivory or bone portion, but executed on a much larger scale, and, again, in pictorial designs executed in different colored woods, and, later, bone, ivory, ebony, marble, mother of pearl, etc.* Intarsia *simply means "inserted,"—*i.e. *inlaid-work, and in its strictest sense is applied to wood inlay only.*

Certosina (*pronounced* chairto'seena) *work is a very delicate and beautifully executed inlay of triangular pieces of bone or ivory designed in set geometric patterns. It derives its name from the fact that it was at first peculiar to the Cistercian monks—a reformed order of Benedictines founded by St. Bruno—of the Certosa or Charterhouse of Pavia.*

Gesso *(pronounced* jesso*) work is that in which the decoration is effected in*

tions. A superbly executed *certosina* desk-cabinet is illustrated on Plate VIII.

In other pieces, such as mirror frames and a small settee which became fashionable toward the last years of the 16th century, richly-carved scrolled outlines, with heavy exaggerated curves, became typical of Venetian pieces. And this characteristic of the deep curves remained a feature of Venetian furniture until the end of the 18th century.

Other important objects of furniture in Venetian palaces were the *restello* or rack, a rare piece, generally inlaid with much richness, and from which hung the treasured mirror of polished steel; the bed, an enormous construction with a tester in pure entablature form and carved stringboards; the small *cassette*, or jewel caskets, almost invariably exquisite pieces of craftsmanship, in *gesso;* and, in the 16th century, musical instruments like the spinet or the clavichord, upon the decoration of which the skill of great artists was frequently employed. Taken as a whole, the furniture of northern Italy in the 14th to 16th centuries was less purely native than were the products of Tuscany and Umbria and Rome, and

plaster-of-Paris, which was then painted with red lead and gilded. In furniture, such as that of Venice, where it was very popular, the relief is fairly high.

Pastiglia *(pronounced* pasteelya*) is a sort of experimental* gesso *work in much lower relief, evidently before craftsmen had recognised the high relief possibilities of plaster-of-Paris* gypsum *moulding.*

as the 17th century drew near, the first ripple of the great wave of eclecticism, which was to submerge Italian art forever, began to make itself felt. By the middle of that century the spirit had died and Italian furniture design had resolved itself into a servile, and not often felicitous, imitation of the styles of other countries, all of which had received their original impulse from the masters of the early and high Renaissance to whom Art was God and their City's Glory, His Prophet.

CHAPTER V

THE RENAISSANCE IN FRANCE

WHEN Charles VIII of France, ugly and deformed, invaded Italy in 1494, and by means of a secret pact with the cowardly, dissolute, Piero dei Medici, son of *Il Magnifico*, took possession of the proud city of Florence, on his way to Rome and Naples, he, in the ultra-modern idiom, "started something."

It would be folly to say that his "peaceful penetration" into the birthplace of the Italian Renaissance, at a time when that great movement was on the point of attaining its highest expression, gave the *coup de grâce* to the Gothic era, for as explained in an earlier chapter, the Gothic style had long since passed its zenith and had reached, not merely a state of decadence, but a condition of almost complete artistic debasement, before its displacement by the Renaissance style had begun. One has only to look at such atrocities of taste as the church of Caudebec-en-Caux, in Normandy (Fig. 23), to realize that the great spirit of Gothic had fled from the land of its

PLATE XXVI.—HANDSOME MARQUETRY CABINET WITH EARLY FLORAL DECORATIONS. ABOUT 1695. (See page 212)

PLATE XXVII, a.—SEAWEED-MARQUETRY SLOPE-TOP DESK. WILLIAM-AND-MARY. (See page 212)

PLATE XXVII, b.—QUEEN ANNE STYLE SEAWEED-MARQUETRY COMMODE. (See page 212)

conception, and that the time was ripe for a new style. Charles VIII, then, cannot be blamed, as he has been blamed by some French archeologists, for hastening the doom of an art indigenous to the soil of France, in favor of a foreign art. Nevertheless, that 15th century invasion of Milan and Florence played a great part, not only in the formation of the new style in France, but also in the hastening of its advent, for Charles' association with such intellectuals as the Italian nobles of the day cannot fail to have seduced him to the new culture which had already become so important a factor in Italian life. Moreover, Charles VIII, like his astute, if unscrupulous, father, Louis XI, was a keen judge of matters artistic, and when he returned to France, he carried back with him numerous examples of Renaissance furniture, particularly chests and *credenze*, and also led away in his train many artists and arti-

FIG. 23.—WEST FRONT OF THE CHURCH OF CAUDEBEC-EN-CAUX (VERY LATE GOTHIC)

sans of taste and understanding, who were to lay the foundations of what we know as the French Renaissance style.

It must not be thought, however, that the invasion of the domain of art in France by Italian craftsmen could impose purely Italian ideals of decoration upon a people whose mind has ever been open and pliant, just because the decay of the national, or Gothic, style had rendered it ready to receive anything good that was offered in relief from what had become a veritable thralldom. Instead of being planted root and branch in French soil, ready to bear fruit in accordance with its origin, the root of the Italian Renaissance alone was planted in a prepared soil. Thus when the tree began to appear above the surface, it fell under the influence of French taste, and became an almost pure expression of the genius of that people.

The great period of the French Renaissance was the reign of Francis I (1515-1547). After the victory of Marignano, at which the young king was knighted by the immortal Bayard, the *Chevalier sans peur et sans reproche*, Francis, became a sort of European hero, adulated by all and sundry, even by the famous artists who were grafting the new artistic style on to the resuscitated remains of the classical

epoch. Leonardo da Vinci, perhaps the most complete and versatile genius the world has ever produced; Seralio the great architect; Primaticcio and Il Rosso who founded the school of Fontainebleau; and that Master of Masters in precious-metal working, Benvenuto Cellini; all these followed Francis to his own country, and inspired the production of masterpieces under that king's highly-intelligent patronage. Throughout the entire period, the evidence is clear that French Renaissance art was the direct descendant of the Italian movement, just as Elizabethan furniture design was the British child of that same remarkable urge. The classical motives in which interest had been revived by the excavations in Greece and Rome were the basis of all the offshoots of the artistic aspect of the Re-birth, but, whereas in the beginning, they were adopted by the Italian craftsmen almost in their ancient purity of line and proportion and associated parts, they were, in England and France, modified to suit the peculiar conditions which obtained in those two countries at the time of their adoption.

French cabinet makers of the Renaissance, for example, never adopted the Italian method of inlaying ivory, tortoise-shell, mother-of-pearl, lead, ebony, and so forth, which, while it pleases at first glance by

the skill of workmanship, is, nevertheless, in less perfect taste than carving of the wood itself, as executed by the great schools of Burgundy and the Ile de France.* Less perfect taste, in northern countries, than in Italy, because the climatic conditions of damp and cold, in constant and rapid alternation with dryness and heat, were totally unsuited to so delicate an art as shallow inlay. We see the effect of bad atmospheric conditions upon marquetry, particularly in the disintegration of English and Dutch furniture of the late 17th and 18th centuries in American homes over-heated by radiators. And as Oscar Wilde, prince of æsthetics, put it, "taste in art implies, fundamentally, suitability to circumstances," illustrating his point by saying that the western miner was the best-dressed man in America, because, his garb, colorful and picturesque, was perfectly adapted to the work in which he was engaged. So, the French, with that keenness of perception which is so characteristic of their taste in art, denied to either inlay or marquetry the right of citizenship until much later.

The nearest that northern countries ever came to this passion for *intarsia* or *tarsia* and *certosina*, in the 16th century, was in the typical chequerboard and lozenge inlay designs executed in bog-oak and holly,

** André Charles Boulle, who employed this form of inlay was the exception which proves the rule* (*see p. 199*).

of Elizabethan and very early Jacobean furniture—not later than 1605 to 1607—until it came in again in the form of marquetry—inlay into veneer—imported from Holland, in the latter half of the 17th century.

French writers divide the French Renaissance into two main periods: that which they call *Francis I* (1515-1547), in which they include the reigns of Charles VIII (1483-1498) and Louis XII (1498-1515)—or the years between 1483 to 1547—and the period of Henri II (1547-1559) and *Catherine de Medici*, which again included the reigns of their sons, Francis II (1559-1560), Charles IX (1560-1574), and Henri III (1574-1589); and that of Henri IV (1589-1610), in which the debasement which characterized the style of his son, Louis XIII began to appear. The Henri Deux style proper covers the years of that king's reign. It is a curious coincidence that the two periods were almost of the same duration, to wit, sixty-four and sixty-three years, respectively.

The first, that of Francis I, was transitional, between the dying Gothic and the rising Renaissance, and we see in this style the most naïve but charming juxtapositions of pseudo-classical form and ornament and the elaborate decoration and four-centred

arches of the moribund Gothic. A good example is shown in a late 15th century chest in the Victoria and Albert Museum with its traceried window-panels surmounted by typical Renaissance grotesques under a frieze of classical *guilloches* running right round the chest, while another, a stall (Plate IX) dating about five years later, is composed of an upper portion entirely Gothic—the centre stile—while the lower section comprises two purely Renaissance panels of different design with a Gothic buttress stile, which itself is carved with a Renaissance pilaster decoration. And, unlike as are the two styles, there is a pleasing effect in the naïve, frank manner in which they were combined in those transitional days of the French revival.

The architectural mode of the Francis I period is characterized by very high roofs at an extremely sharp angle; high, narrow chimney-stacks; and a profusion of mixed Gothic and Renaissance ornament, with windows and doorways constructed in the form of the "Tudor" Arch (Plate X, a) surmounted by a flat bracket—or ogee—frequently decorated with the salamander emblem of Francis, or at other times with the four-centre arch and the usual late Gothic crocket. The Vanderbilt mansion at Fifty-seventh Street in New York (Plate X, b) was a perfect

example of this French Renaissance style, while the doorway of the other Vanderbilt residence, between Fifty-second and Fifty-third Streets, (Plate III, a) offered an excellent illustration of the use of the salamander in conjunction with the "Tudor" type arch enriched with carved foliage. In France, in old houses, we occasionally find traces of this *François Premier* architectural style, particularly in the fireplaces and the very high hoods, in the shape of a roof, above them, with the royal salamander, generally carved in the centre of the panel.

In such furniture as does not present the admixture of styles previously mentioned, we find the Italian influence very strong indeed. But the French artist-craftsmen, even in those early days of a new style, refused to copy slavishly. No better example of this independence can be presented than in *sgabello* side-chairs, in which the heavy elaborate back and front panel-supports of the Italian model have given place to a trio—sometimes a quartet—of delicately-turned spindle legs, while the back panel is also relieved by piercing. Yet their descent from the Florentine *sgabello* is unquestionable. The tables of the period are very much like the Italian tables of Florence and Siena—which, in their turn, are directly descended from old Roman marble and stone tables

—with handsomely carved panel-supports at each end, connected either by a flat low stretcher or a series of "plain-centre" arches on round, tapering stanchions. The latter are closer to their Italian origin. The salamander motive was an extremely popular ornament in purely French-designed furniture of this period. (*See the house at 58th St. and Seventh Avenue in New York, built in the François I style.*)

A type of furniture peculiar to the period of Francis I is that which is embellished with circular medallion panels in each of which is a carved head and shoulders in low relief. This style penetrated to England where it was known as "romayne" work. Its origin was unquestionably Saracenic and was carried out in Italy in ivory and metal inlay work. The chest represented on Plate XI, a, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and bearing on its surface a number of carved mythological and feudal subjects in circular medallions, is a good example of this Italianised product of the East. The shields-of-arms, of which there are a large number on this chest, appear to be dominated by the "ermines" of Brittany which are to be seen twice on the lid and three times on the side. A fine example of French "romayne" work is illustrated in Plate XI, b.

And then a change came over the situation. The

Italian artists and designers who had come to France in the trains of Charles VIII, Louis XII, and *François Premier*, had so successfully educated their French brethren in the technique of their art that no names save those of Frenchmen appear among the craftsmen employed, a few years later, on the woodwork of the great Château de Gaillon built for the Archbishop of Rouen, a nephew of Charles VIII. The French Renaissance was out of its swaddling clothes and able to walk alone, a proud and lusty infant.

Most of the cabinet work of the second French Renaissance period can be ascribed to one or the other of the two great schools, the Burgundian school of Hugues Sambin, and the Parisian school of Jacques Androuët du Cerceau, who was about ten years the senior of his brilliant contemporary. These two designer-craftsmen dominated French applied art from the day Jacques du Cerceau published his first book of drawings, and with their advent may be said to have commenced the decline of the direct Italian influence which had been so strong in the reign of Francis I. Jacques du Cerceau having been born in 1510 and admitted as a Master by the powerful Corporation of Cabinet-Makers in the neighborhood of his thirtieth year—it was rare that

an *ébéniste* or *huchier* was admitted as Master before that age—must have started work on his own account a few years before the death of Francis I and the accession of his son, Henri II, after whom the new style was named. But du Cerceau had travelled extensively in Italy during the course of his studies, as we know from his sketchbooks. Therefore, in the first flush of his early success, he still adhered to the Italianate forms and ornament. We know that he "bluffed" his fellow-countrymen into adopting certain pure Italian designs by ascribing them to ancient Rome, hence more worthy of application to French furniture and architecture!

But that phase of du Cerceau's career lasted only a very short time, and by the accession of Henri II he was ready to create that very characteristic type of furniture with which his name is always connected. In 1549, Hugues Sambin, of Dijon, Burgundy, was admitted to the Corporation, and with his contemporary's work before him, created another similar, yet even more distinctive, type of French Renaissance furniture.

Now one of the commonest errors, not only of writers on furniture but also of museum directors, is to classify French Renaissance furniture in too many local schools. There were, in fact, but the two main

schools, those of Paris (*Ile de France*) and of Burgundy, with another possible admission in the form of the School of Lyons, which, it must be acknowledged, had characteristics not to be found in either of the two most important schools. These have their own distinct types, and it is always a matter of surprise to us that so many mistakes are made in the attribution of French Renaissance pieces to one or the other of these two schools.

There is all the less reason for such misunderstandings in that the founders of both modes, Jacques Androuët du Cerceau (1500-c. 1585) of the school of Paris, and Sambin (c. 1510-1602), published drawings of their ideas in series of plates and even in the form of books, much as Chippendale and his contemporaries published their sale catalogues two centuries later. Therefore, it is not difficult to distinguish the works of one school from those of the other, when the causes for the differences between them are looked into. But there are no absolutely certain authentic pieces by either man in existence, though a table and *armoire* in the Dijon Museum are attributed to Hugues Sambin on what appear to be fair grounds for authentification. Nevertheless, all we can do about such pieces is to class them as "school of . . . " one or the other of the

two designers, according to their distinctive types.

Jacques Androuët, better known as Jacques du Cerceau (Jack o' the Hoop) from the golden circle which, it is said, adorned the sign of his shop, having traveled in his journeyman years all over Italy where he made numerous drawings, came back to his native city, thoroughly imbued with the Renaissance forms in vogue in that country. Therefore, making due allowances for du Cerceau's birthright as a Frenchman, with all the intellectual and artistic independence which that heritage implies, we find in his designs and the works of his school considerably more of the classic restraint of the Italian schools than in those of his contemporary and rival of Burgundy. (Plates XII and XIII.) But we must remember that the work of the disciples of two schools often intermingles.

Typical of the du Cerceau school works are the broadly carved acanthus scrolls with the rosette-like flower in the centre, long flowing contour lines emphasized by one feature which, we maintain, is *the* distinguishing characteristic of the school of Paris of that day. We refer to the long necks of du Cerceau's *chimeræ* or grotesques, which are present in every piece of the school. They are inordinately long, like the neck of a dragon or a serpent, giving

the whole figure a fine, slender appearance, concording well with the tradition of grace which has always been peculiar to the works produced in the Ile-de-France. (Fig. 24.)

The works attributable to the Hugues Sambin school of Burgundy show, on the contrary, no restraint whatsoever. They are over-laden with sensu-

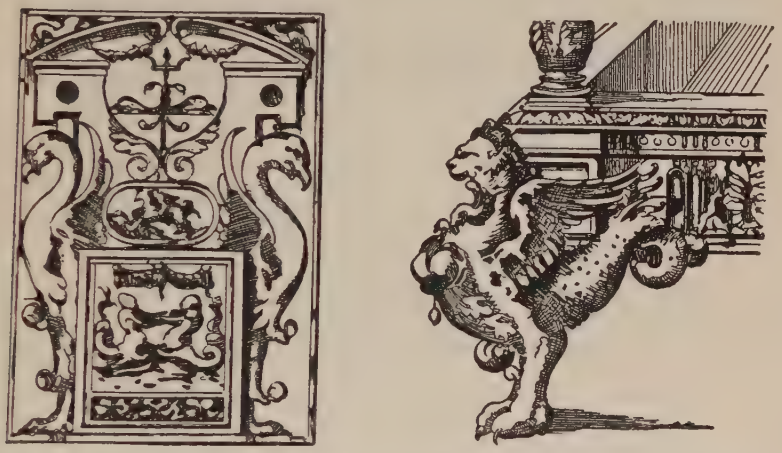


Fig. 24.—Two Extracts from du Cerceau's Book of Drawings

ous, high-relief carving of fruit and flower garlands, wherever it is possible to place them, while the grotesques are *naturalistic*, thoroughly human, as far as the upper part of the figure is concerned, with no attempt at idealisation. Heavy-muscled men's and full-breasted women's torsos occur on all Burgundian pieces, with short, or at most, natural-length

necks. This question of the length of the necks is important, for it definitely divides the two schools.

The *ensemble* difference between the du Cerceau and the Sambin schools (Ile de France (Paris) and Burgundy, respectively) may be summed up in a few words. The Paris school concentrated on gra-

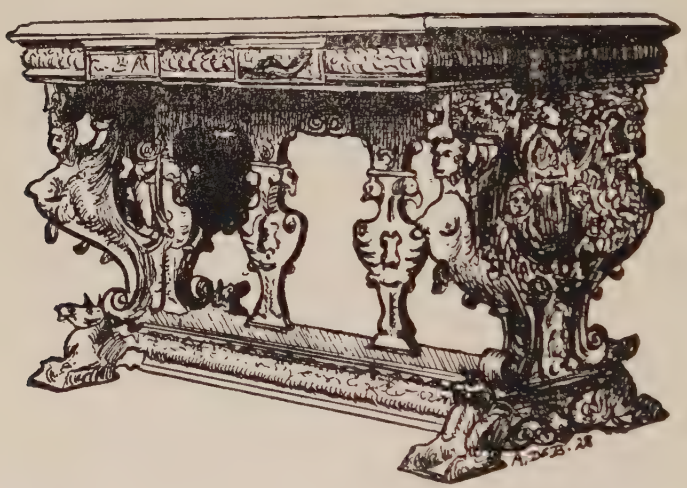


Fig. 25.—A Renaissance Table of the School of Sambin

cility of line, harmonious contours, and fine proportions, while the school of Burgundy sacrificed line beauty to magnificence of detail carving. A du Cerceau table, for example, is light and airy, compared to a Sambin table heavily laden with grapes and pears, enormous curled acanthus-leaf feet and short, stocky, human figures. (Fig. 25.)

There was still another fairly distinctive school, that of Lyons, though apparently no outstanding Master is identified with it. Its typical features are low flat "strap-work" scrolls with a "mascaron" (male or female head) in medium relief, in the centre of the panel, and a long feather-like adaptation of the acanthus leaf running up a large portion of the stiles. There is, in fact, much similarity between the work of this school and that of earlier Florence, in restraint and sobriety of ornament, but the figure carving is very poor in comparison with that of the other two schools.

Later, owing to the dissemination throughout France of the designs of both the Paris and Dijon masters, imitators sprang up. The works of some these followers, particularly of Jacques du Cerceau, have been ticketed as of his direct school. Etienne de l'Auln, who worked between 1589 and 1624, and Nicholas Bachelier, both men of great talent, carried on, and to a great extent *fused*, the characteristics of the two great schools, which explains largely why pieces bearing characteristics of each are so incorrectly attributed in many museums. It also makes their dates later than those given to them on the official explanatory labels.

The school of Normandy has nothing of im-

portance to remark upon, save that its products were mainly manufactured in oak, whereas the Paris, Burgundy, and Southern schools used walnut almost exclusively.

Now, in spite of the hard struggle of the two principal Frenchmen, aided by their royal patrons, to express in their works the genius of the French race, by grafting their original ideas upon the parent stem of the Italian Renaissance, there was a period immediately after the death of Francis I, when the Italian feeling was almost predominant, and produced that very handsome and simple style which we know as "*Henri Deux.*" The cause of this temporary Italian domination is not far to seek. Francis I, a Frenchman to the core, brought over the Alps on his return to his native land, a number of great artists, who were, nevertheless, his paid retainers, according to the custom of the day, and it was their province simply to lay the foundations of a new style, to become eventually a French mode. But with the death of Francis I in 1547, the young wife of Henri II (1547-1559) took into her capable hands—not as yet the reins of government which remained, until the death of her husband at a jousting tourney, twelve years later, under the influence of the beautiful Diane de Poitiers—the direc-

PLATE XXVIII, a.—CHARACTERISTIC ASYMMETRICAL LOUIS XV CARTOUCHE. (See page 228)

PLATE XXVIII, b.—CORNER OF A LOUIS XV TABLE BY CRESSENT, WITH HIS EXQUISITE "ESPAGNOLETTES" AT THE LEGS. (See page 231)

PLATE XXIX.—LOUIS XV COMMODE PARQUETTED IN IRREGULAR FORMS AND ENRICHED WITH "ORMOLU" MOUNTS BY CAFFIERI. (See page 230)

tion of artistic matters; content to bide her time in matters of statesmanship. And this sovereign was none other than Catherine de Medici, great-granddaughter of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and as Florentine in her conceptions of art and statecraft as her father-in-law was Gallic. So under the Tuscan influence, the *Henri-Deux* style, which did not achieve its full development until after the reign of the sovereign whose name it bears, became almost a copy of the simple forms in vogue in Catherine's native province. Rectilinear panels, and columnar legs of the simplest Roman Doric, or Tuscan, type, unfluted and with a square *abacus*, no ornamental carving, save betimes a tardy linen-fold in low relief, and the characteristic nail-head or diamond point, and, in richer pieces, made for the Royal residences, an escutcheon bearing the three interlaced crescents of the monarch's coat-of-arms, surmounted or flanked by the entwined D's of Diane de Poitiers, are typical of this mode. There is a so close resemblance between the Henri II style and the contemporary Tuscan that a pair of walnut tables in the Metropolitan Museum are ticketed "French *or* Italian, XVI Century." They are unquestionably French, Henri II, from the double-cross stretcher, the northern bun-foot, and the drops, which are never found in purely Italian

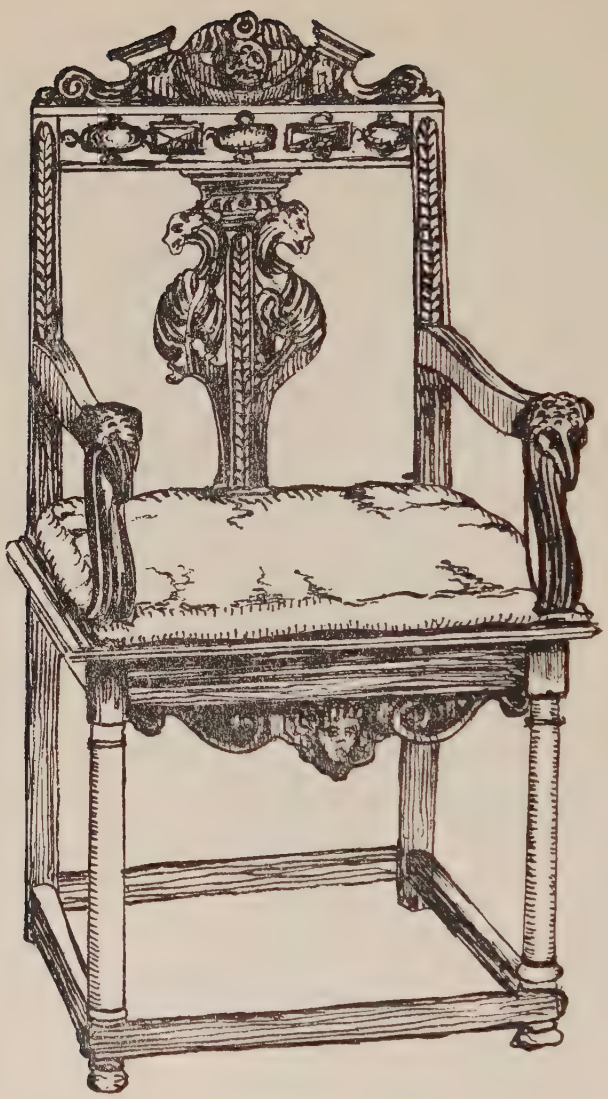


Fig. 26.—Typical Henri II "Fine Chair."

works of the period. Sometimes, but very rarely, the columnar legs of Henri II pieces are fluted, with Ionic capitals. These columns appear everywhere; at the corners of chests, as engaged or free columns running up the full height of a double two-section cupboard; as table-legs, or as those of chairs.

Chairs in the Henri II style, proper, are simple frame structures, with open backs, in the middle of which is a splat, either plain or ornamented, as in our illustration, with a typical grotesque on each side. The legs are plain, unfluted Tuscan columns, joined by a square-section stretcher running round all four, beneath which are Dutch-type ball-feet. The arms are generally parallel to each other, but serpentine in their length and frequently end in a carved ram's head. (Fig. 26.)

Henri II furniture is simple throughout, and comes as a pleasant relief from the frequently overcharged ornamentation of the du Cerceau and Sambin schools, though these three styles persisted side by side through the reigns of Henri's sons: Francis II, first husband of the ill-fated Mary, Queen of Scots; his brother and successor, Charles IX, in whose reign the Massacre of St. Bartholomew (1572) took place; and the degenerate and effeminate Henri III, the youngest of the sons of Henri II and Catherine de

Medici. But in the reign of Henri IV, the great Henri of Navarre, victor of Ivry (1589-1610), a change of style began to make itself felt. The king's first wife, Marguerite de Valois, was the sister of his three predecessors on the throne, and for a time French artists held sway in furniture designs. But when, in 1600, Henri married again, this time another Italian princess, Marie de Medici, Italianate forms once more became the fashion. Of pieces of furniture of this period, we find cupboards in two sections, with immensely long columns running from the foot right to the cornice. These columns, though generally fluted, were not always so by any means. (Fig. 27.)

FIG. 27.—UPPER SECTION OF A HENRI IV CABINET. *c.* 1610

With the beginning of the 17th century, we find constantly reproductions in furniture of the architectural mode, sometimes called the Jesuit

style, from the baroque churches built in Italy for that new order founded in 1534 by the Spaniard, Ignatius de Loyola. It is recognisable by its broken pediments, between the two portions of which is a sort of panel comprising a niche for a statue and frequently surmounted by a pediment of its own, which again is sometimes broken or divided. In other cases, Jesuit style churches or furniture have no ordinary pediment but simply the panel as above, but larger, and flanked either by inverted consoles, or grotesques.

Towards the end of the reign of Henri IV, we come across an innovation in furniture, obviously derived from an architectural model in stone, to which medium, be it said, it is better suited than to wood. We refer to the so-called "*bossage*," or bevelled-edged blocks of stone placed over the row below in such a way that one block "straddles" two —as bricks are laid. These occur particularly in columns, at first running up approximately one-half of the column's total height, and later, taking the form of single broad bands of stone placed at regular intervals up the whole length of the column, as in the Luxembourg (Senate) Palace in Paris or the Hotel Gotham doorway in New York.

A large cupboard-cabinet in the Metropolitan

Museum of Art illustrates this type of furniture, which, by the way, is, as a rule, further decorated by the Flemish turned spindles, which were to become so popular in England in their split form, as enrichments of the stiles of chairs, chests, and cabinets. (Plate XIV.)

And with this reign of the first of the Bourbon monarchs, we leave the era of architectural furniture, and enter into more modern times when furniture was no longer a rarity to be used by royalty and the nobles only, but an ordinary object of necessity in every household.

CHAPTER VI

THE TUDOR AND ELIZABETHAN STYLES

ALTHOUGH the Virgin Queen was herself a scion of the House of Tudor, the daughter of the ill-fated Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII, the Elizabethan style stood apart from what is generally known as the Tudor to such an extent that they were in reality two separate modes.

The Tudor style, properly speaking, was but a transitional type connecting the dying Gothic with the budding Renaissance imported from Italy, much as the furniture of Charles VIII, Louis XII, and Francis I of France was in the latter country.

But the last manifestation of the Gothic style in England differed very considerably from French Gothic of the same period, *i.e.*, the 15th century. In France, as we have seen, the third of the three Gothic styles was a thing of exquisite beauty, superficially at least, a dream of wonderfully carved lace-work in stone, with its flame-like traceries in free curves, and charming—if constructionally worthless—

bracket and basket-handle arches. The rose-window, always one of the glories of French Gothic, divided now into flowing mullions of lovely design, held its own until the total elimination of the Gothic mode in France. As W. J. Locke says of Vendôme Cathedral, one of the gems of the decadent period: "Vendôme, the last word in Gothic! The funeral pyre of Gothic! That tracery! The whole thing is on fire! It is all leaping flame, as if some god had said 'Let this noble thing that is dead have a stupendous end!' Vendôme always appears to me like the obsequies of a Viking chief. They sent the hero away to sea in a blaze of fire."

So did France celebrate the death, or, rather, shall we say, the ascension to Walhalla, of the grandest architectural concept of the human brain.

In England, however, a very different atmosphere regulated the last days of Gothic. Let us not forget, at this crucial point, that while England by her charming "Decorated" (2nd Period) Gothic had inspired the Flamboyant style—this is acknowledged by the well-known French expert, Roger de Félice—English Gothic, like that of every country save France, was provincial, and imbued with all the faults that "provincialism" in anything implies. So in the 15th century, when the French "masters of

the works"—the term "architect" was not yet employed—gave free rein to their remarkably brilliant imagination and their unparalleled technique, their English contemporaries seemed, as it were, to "draw in their skirts about them" and prudishly set themselves to correct the "too free manners" of the French. Provincialism rampant!

And the result was the Perpendicular style of late English Gothic, which despite occasional beauties, particularly in such details as the exquisite fan-vaulting, is, nevertheless, in its purest form an artistic barbarism. Its perpendicular mullions, running right through into the archivolts of the openings, its horizontal transoms, its large triforium and clerestory windows, with their flat horizontal bases, capping the western portals—as at Westminster Abbey (Fig. 28)—are all in constant conflict with the grand spirit of free and noble curves which we call Gothic. Perpendicular Gothic always gives the writer the feeling of being the outward expression of an inferiority complex. It exudes, in short, that desire to produce something better than the best which the French have so admirably conveyed in their proverb, "*Le mieux est l'ennemi du bien.*"

So much for ecclesiastical architecture. The domestic style of houses and their contents for

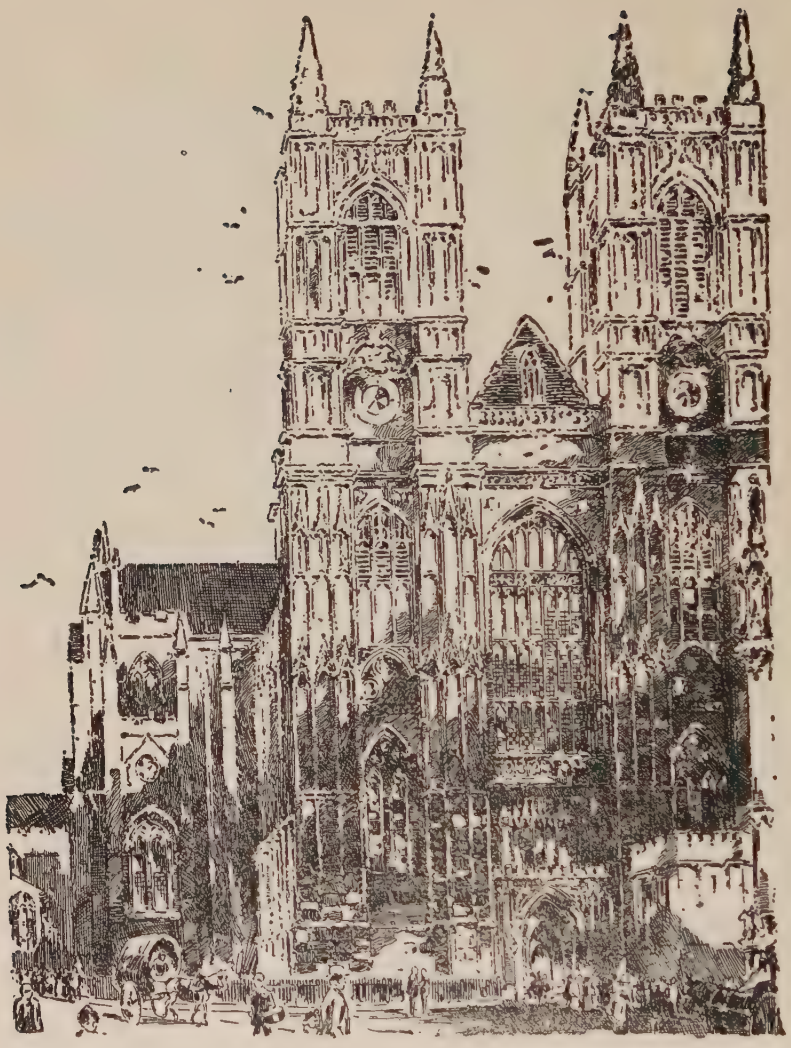


FIG. 28.—WEST FRONT OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

Note the great "perpendicular" window above the entrance, the mullions running straight into the curves of the arches, and the horizontal transoms.

the nobles and the burgess class, now wealthy and distinctly conscious of its importance in the social scheme, was simpler, less pretentious, and consequently, in better taste.

Without going into the matter of the exterior of houses, which is only exceptionally within our province, let us glance at the interior furnishings of a mansion of Henry VIII's time. The most important thing we shall learn is that already the walls were wainscotted. Many writers on furniture place the introduction of this wall-panelling in Elizabeth's reign, but an old record of Henry's days tells us distinctly that "the sydes of the parlor were celyd with wenskett" (the sides of the parlor were sealed (covered) with wainscotting). The walls above the panelling were painted with scenes of falconry, tournaments, or battles, until tapestries became fashionable. Windows were of stained glass, but not, as in churches, in many colors. It appears from old papers that until at least the ascension of Elizabeth, only white and green glass, the "Beryll and clere Crystall" of Lydgate's *Troy*, was used in secular edifices such as municipal buildings and private palaces.

In the 16th century, noblemen's mansions began to relax from fortified castles into social halls; and as self-defence was no longer so immediately the

question at issue, convenience took its place. Thus, furniture began to acquire a greater degree of permanency in its character, and a number of new objects came into being, though most of the interior decoration of English houses in the 16th century owed its origin to foreign countries.

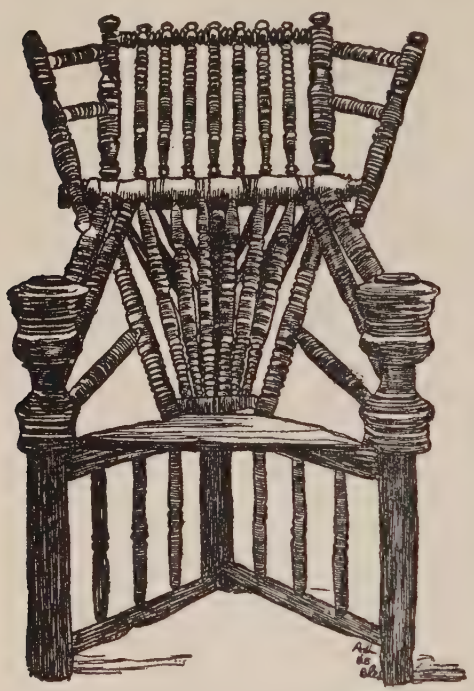


FIG. 29.—A LATER AND MORE ELABORATE SPECIMEN OF A VARANGIAN CHAIR
Note turned spindles.

To such an extent was this the case that as early as 1455 and 1483, we find petitions addressed to Parliament against the importation of silk-thread by resident Italians (Lombards) and of furniture, wrought-iron work and painted glass, since these invasions of foreign materials were "taking the bread away" from native workers. Later the Flemings, driven from Flanders by the oppressions of the Duke of Alva, fled to England in "shoals and were

received by Elizabeth with humanity and hospitality," says Andrews.

The only products of Henry VIII's reign that one has any chance of acquiring—if one is willing to run a big risk—are an occasional very simple Varangian (or thrown) spindle chair* with a triangular seat (see Fig. 29), a joint-stool, or a bible box of oak, with "romayne work" (circular medallion portraits), very crudely executed (Plate XV, a and b) and perhaps a transitional folding-chair of

** The word "thrown" in connection with Varangian chairs, means "turned" or "thrown on a lathe," using the old technical expression. As regards the origin of the Varangian chair as a Byzantine model, we take issue with the majority of writers who have taken it for granted that it was originally a Byzantine conception. Now while, in all probability, this spindle chair came into fashion with the return of British members of the famous guard of the Eastern Roman Emperors, we think there can be little doubt that the model was first taken to Constantinople (Byzantium) by the Scandinavian Varangians. These men passing through Russia were called by Novgorod to consolidate the foundations of Russia, which they did in 862 A.D., an event commemorated by a monument erected in honor of its thousandth anniversary in 1862 and which is still standing. That there was close contact between the Varangians and Byzantium is proved by the fact that Novgorod's famous cathedral of St. Sophia was built by Byzantine masters-of-the-works (architects) in the 11th century. Furthermore the Varangians supplanted the ancient Khazar traders between Novgorod and the Golden Horn after a sharp struggle culminating in the defeat of this Armenian people —who had been a power in Europe for nearly 900 years—by the allied Russians and Byzantines in 1016 A.D.*

The northern origin of the Varangians would explain the typical features of the chair named after them, viz. the turned spindles and the triangular seat, the latter generally accepted—with, we think, inadequate reasons—as a Byzantine feature. It is rather a northern characteristic, in our opinion, as is the turning of the spindles and main constructional supports of these chairs, for we find a similar triangular seat—without a back—among early Saxon furniture figuring in ancient MSS.

Our conclusion, therefore, is that the Varangian chair existed, in general type, long before it was taken to Constantinople by the Russified Scandinavians and that its name comes direct from its original designers, rather than at second-hand from the Varangian Guard of the effete Emperors of the East.

the type known as "Glastonbury" the direct ancestor of the later wainscot chair. Or maybe an X-shaped folding-chair from time to time, but as few of them are of oak, they are more likely to be importations from France or Flanders than native work. There is also a small table, identified with the reign of Henry VIII, which is worthy of mention. It is high, small, oblong-topped with a cornice and frieze effect, standing upon four slimly-turned legs, decorated with enormous "melon-bulbs," evidently inspired by the same Italian Renaissance motive as inspired the later Elizabethan "cup-and-cover" bulb. (Fig. 30.)

(*Courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art.*)

FIG. 30.—ELIZABETHAN COURT CUPBOARD WITH CUP-AND-COVER BULB SUPPORTS

The other Tudor sovereigns, with the exception of Elizabeth, have but little interest for us. We see advertisements occasionally of "Philip and Mary" pieces, supposedly typical of a style current during

the reign of the daughter of Catherine of Aragon and her Spanish husband, Philip II, he who in 1588 lost the Armada against the British and Irish coasts. But such pieces, if genuine, are again nothing but importations from Italy and Spain and possess no British national traits.

And so we come to the style which we call the Elizabethan, in which for the first time we find, despite many foreign influences, that sturdiness of contour, that care of detail in finish, that love of oak for its own sake, which gives such prestige to early furniture even in these modernistic times, and remains throughout the characteristic feature of English furniture.

We cannot say, with perfect truth, that, in the abstract, Elizabethan furniture is beautiful. But it is so hard for us to detach ourselves from the feeling of reverence for age, that we are apt to accept as greater than they are, in reality, all things that are enfolded, as it were, in the rose-hued mist of bygone days, just as we are inclined to esteem the work of other nations more highly than our own. This is a national trait, common to all civilised nationalities. It is a proof of mental wholesomeness, for it implies a spirit of emulation, and a readiness to accept for use something which others are better able to do than

ourselves. It is also the cause of the constant copying and adapting of one country's works from another's throughout the whole life of furniture's development and decadence, and is peculiar to no period nor to any cultured or uncultured land. The great Roman civilisation borrowing its architectural style from Greece; Renaissance Italy going back seven centuries to take as its model ancient Rome; Peter the Great, using the vast resources of 18th century Russia, to emulate the achievements of tiny Holland; Spain, in the 15th century, striving for a place in art by modelling her products upon those of Flanders; France borrowing from Italy; England, from Flanders, Italy and France; and in the late 17th and 18th centuries, Italy, the mother of modern art, reduced to begging her styles from all her children and grand-children; such is the picture which meets the eye frankly opened to receive a true, if at times, humiliating, impression. Nor is the continent of Europe alone in this. We need only glance at the art of Japan to see what that great people owes to China. There no shame is admitted that the older Chinese civilisation knew more than its island neighbors. In the year 200 A.D., after the Empress Jingo had conquered Korea—saturated with ancient Chinese culture—she insisted upon an annual tribute "until

PLATE XXXV.—CHINESE TEAK-WOOD CHAIR CARVED WITH MOTIVES WHICH INSPIRED CHIPPENDALE'S "CHINESE TASTE" FURNITURE. (See page 251)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE XXXVI.—EXQUISITE LOUIS XVI CABINET BY RIESENER WITH REMARKABLE BRONZES BY GOUTTHIERE. (See page 259)

the sun rose in the West, the rivers flowed backwards, and the stones on earth became stars in the sky." * The Koreans fulfilled their agreement for close upon thirteen centuries afterwards. But this tribute was not of the usual gold and silver demanded by conquering armies. Calligraphy, art and science, literature, religion, law codes, politics and social economy were, to the eyes of the heroic Empress, of more value than material treasures, and each tribute-bearing embassy from Korea brought new masters in all the arts and sciences, as well as priests and nuns, until the savagery of the early Japanese people had given place to at least a strong veneer of culture which, in time, under the Ashikaga and Tokugawa Shoguns, became a thing of reality and, in many directions, unparalleled models of perfection to the remainder of the world.

This is all less of a digression than would appear at first glance, for it teaches us a great lesson, *viz.*, that we can go too far in art, as in other branches of the tree of life, in search of originality, and that little good can come out of anything of which the roots are not founded upon tradition. This is why no new movements in furniture design have ever become

* *The* Kojiki *(Records of Ancient Matters): Basil Hall Chamberlain's translation (Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan, Vol. IV, London).*

permanent, nor ever can. Of all the styles of furniture which will be reviewed in this book, there is only one which is truly original, *viz.*, that of Louis XV, a period of such atrocious taste as France had never before exhibited, and which was largely inspired by foreigners. Nor did it last long. Such modern movements as the Munich secessionists attempted some thirty years ago (*"L'Art nouveau"*) died within five years. Time will show how long the present effort holds its own before its inevitable extravagances drive its adherents away in search of the repose exuded by more classical outlines.

Now Elizabethan furniture is a first open recognition of the fact that furniture design is not a British art, but that English craftsmen possessed to a remarkable extent the sense of adaptation of types in vogue in other countries to the peculiar timber and climatic conditions of the British Isles. Also, that, for the time being, even immediate imitation, of French styles, particularly, was suitable neither to the woods available for English furniture, nor to the artistic capabilities of the carvers of the day. There is in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York, a small coffer stool in the "Romayne" manner, in which the two figure medallions are nothing less than grotesques. (Plate XV, a and b.)

Nor is this strange when we reflect that there was no English school, either of painting or of sculpture, until nearly two centuries later, and, therefore, no foundation of artistic knowledge upon which figure-carving could be established. Thus we find this type of work completely abandoned in England, and during the century following the accession of Queen Elizabeth (1558), all British carving is conventional in pattern, whence it very soon degenerated into turned work of simple, though sometimes effective and appropriate, design.

The Elizabethan style proper, that is to say, that which held full sway from 1858 to 1603 A.D., is the English expression of the artistic feeling of the Renaissance, and comprises a notable number of typical features which enable us to date it more or less accurately. "More or less," because Elizabethan type furniture continued to be made for some time after the accession of James I and often leads to much confusion by being dated, proving once again the importance of distinguishing clearly between "style" and "period."

The principal pieces which we can hope to come across in these times, if we are willing and able to pay the price, are heavy-topped draw-tables, refectory tables, court and livery cupboards, wainscot

chairs, of which we shall speak more fully in a chapter devoted to their evolution, and four-poster beds with enormous architectural "testers" or what we

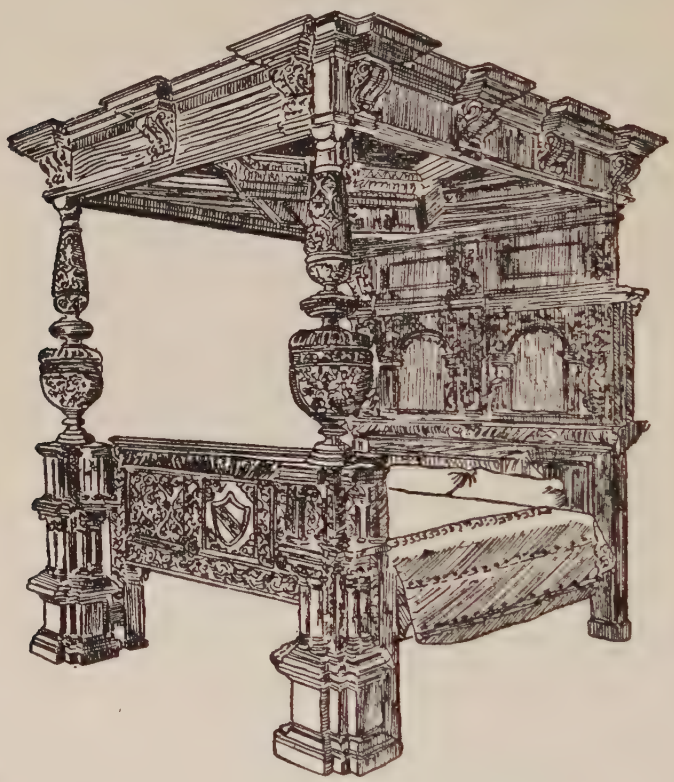


Fig. 31.—Typical Elisabethan Bedstead.

might call roofs, each type except the chairs, comprising in its scheme of support, the great bulbous ornament, known as the "cup-and-cover." (See Fig. 31.)

The draw-table, with its extension ends pushed

into their grooves under the fixed part of the top, standing on four large bulbous legs (Fig. 32), looks clumsy and ill-proportioned. But it must be remembered that these tables were very seldom "closed" and that the extension leaves, pulled out, made the table very close upon twice the length of the main top. Thus the bulbous supports fell into their proper proportions, as they appear in almost every true type of Elizabethan furniture. A genuine draw table of the last half of the 16th century must be of oak, the top formed of thick planks (1½ to 1¾ inches) fitted into each other by the "groove-and-flange" method, and held together by a framework running all around the top. This framework being cut *in the length of the grain*, in each of its four pieces, never pulled apart, for wood does not shrink *with* the grain, only across it, in process of seasoning and drying out. The four bulbous legs—we do not think the two-legged tables with the cup-and-cover ornament are Elizabethan at all, but Jacobean "throw-backs"—are held together by a heavy stretcher placed on the ground, or within

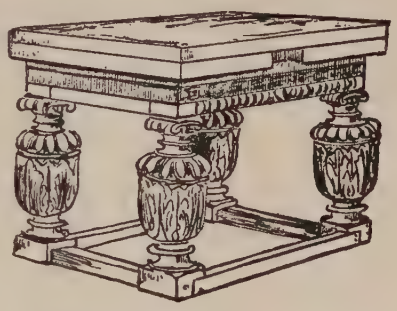


Fig. 32.

an inch of it, and surmounted by a moulded top, a trifle wider than the body of the stretcher. The bulbs of the legs of the earlier and most valuable pieces are carved with broad acanthus leaves (Fig. 32) as to the "cup" portion, while the cover is generally decorated with gadroons in very high relief, disproportionately high in most tables and court-cupboards we have seen. Later even this high-relief carving yielded to inferior strap-work carving, which became gouge-carving in the first half of the next century.

Collectors must be very careful in purchasing, as genuine *untouched* pieces, these highly-ornate Elizabethan draw-tables, for there are innumerable reproductions, honest and dishonest, on the market. For the honest reproduction we have nothing but praise when it is conscientiously copied from a known genuine original. But, of the so-called "guaranteed" antique, we must say "Beware," for there are very few in existence and their scarcity alone allows "genuine untouched" examples to command very high prices. Yet do not rely too much upon the stiffness of the price for that can also be used as a lure for wealthy collectors, and frequently is.

Look at the table itself for internal evidence. First, the top must be very thick and heavy as stated above, for oak was plentiful in England in early

times, since acorns were the staple diet of the peasants' hogs, and so furniture makers saw no reason for stinting themselves in timber. Then look at the worm-holes that may exist in such a piece, remembering that the worm (wood-beetle) enters into wood in its *soft portions only*, and makes only tiny round entrance and exit holes, after which it burrows lengthwise, with the grain, *below the surface*. Therefore, in a piece of *untouched* wood there should be no uncovered worm *channels* showing on the surface. (Figs. 33, a and b.) But if a piece of worm-eaten wood has been sawn or otherwise worked upon, the worker could not possibly avoid cutting through some of the worm-tracks. And it would be well to remember that no honest cabinet-maker or even repairing carpenter would deliberately use a piece of worm-eaten wood for the purpose of "restoring" an old piece.

FIG. 33a.—RIGHT

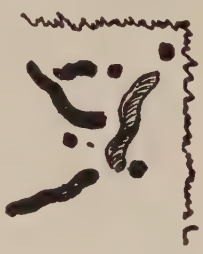


FIG. 33b.—WRONG

The tops of many of these draw-tables and Jacobean refectory tables are only too often made of old oak floor-boards or ship's deck-timbers, and these had to be sawn through to get the requisite thickness.

Hence the uncovered worm-channels. It will be well for the prospective purchaser also to examine not only the upper side of the table top, but the underneath side also, for nail-holes, either left as they were, or filled with putty, at places where there is no apparent reason for using a nail. The guild masters did not turn out work decorated with unnecessary nails, only using these or wooden pegs where they served a clearly-defined purpose. But if the board has been used for something else previously, it will be sure to have nail-holes *out of place*. Do not forget to look underneath the top-boards, for it may be that this side will shed more light on a dishonest situation than the more exposed top. Look carefully for circular saw-marks, or for too regular cutting underneath, for original pieces of this type were cut down to the right thickness, and finished, with an adze.

As for the bulbous legs, study them carefully in every detail, for furniture-fakers do not only forge complete pieces, or assemble a number of old fragments into one object, but they also try to enhance the value of genuine pieces by additional carving and ornamentation. Worm-holes, opened up on the surface, will frequently give their game away. If the wood should happen to be free from worm-holes, examine carefully, by touch as well as by eye, the edges

of the carved details. If it be genuine, such carved work should have a soft, velvety feeling, for it is 300 years old, but if you feel any asperities, any hardness of edge or surface, any "stickiness" where new staining or varnish may have been applied, go warily, for you are treading on thin ice.

Again, do not omit to examine the stretcher which should run around all the four legs, should be deep and thick, and should have a simply moulded top. In the course of this examination, and in addition to points already mentioned, look at the way in which the stretcher has been worn down by the rubbing of feet placed upon it during meals. It is obvious that this "erosion" *cannot be regular*, that there will be more wearing away on the outside than the inside edge. Then look carefully close to the legs, where again there should be less usage (within two or three inches of the upright support). The end stretchers will also show less sign of wear than the "length" pieces, because when the hidden "leaves" were drawn out, as they usually were, the end stretchers were beyond the reach of the diners' feet.

And now we come to the most important factor of all in the appreciation of value and beauty of a genuine old piece, as well as the best means of all of detecting the false from the true. This is so for the

reason that unless a piece of old furniture possesses a good "patina," *i.e.*, the polish conferred by many decades of use and cleaning with the appropriate materials, it is of no value. It is the one thing the faker cannot imitate, and any piece that has been treated with French polish—shellac dissolved in methylated spirits, produced in brown, white, garnet and red—is not only open to suspicion, but valueless from a sale or collector's standpoint.

Old oak should have a hard but smooth surface with a brilliant polish, of a rich brown color, deepening into almost black in the crevices and deep hollows where the dust has not been troubled, after it had been caught by the raw linseed oil with which the pieces were originally treated in the maker's shop. Here again we frequently find the faker at fault, in his desire to have a beautiful, if fraudulently obtained, polish on the "old oak" he desires to sell. He will generally carry the polish and cleanliness right into the depths of the carving, whereas servants of early times were no different from those of today, and their care of the furniture consisted mainly of polishing the outstanding surfaces with raw linseed oil or beeswax and plenty of "elbow-grease" until the use of a beeswax and turpentine mixture became general in the 18th century.

Most of the 16th and early 17th century oak furniture was put together with pegs—in better class pieces—or rough hand-hammered nails in minor ones, such as dole cupboards and hutches, but glue was not used. The corner joints were mortise-and-tenoned together and then pegged or nailed.

In *genuine* pegged pieces, the pegs will project slightly above the surface, for being cut for strength in the length of the grain, they have not shrunk, whereas the board will have done so in a greater or lesser degree, according to its thickness. In nailed pieces the nails should be hand-beaten, not made of drawn wire, which is rounder than the earlier type. The hand-made nails were made as round as possible and should not taper from the point to the head—for that might cause the wood to split—and the point develops more suddenly at the end than in later nails.

And now let us go on to those other characteristic objects of Elizabethan and Jacobean furniture, the Court-cupboard and the Press-cupboard, its cousin. There is a difference between the two which is not always recognised by writers on the subject. Both types are two-body pieces, but the court-cupboard has only the upper portion made into—generally three—small cupboards while the lower portion is

open. (See Fig. 30.) The word "court" is not here an indication that it was a palace piece, but is simply the French word for "short" because the cupboard did not go all the way down. In Elizabethan court cupboards, both upper and lower portions are supported on bulbous legs, as in the example in the Metropolitan Museum, while the upper or cupboard portion has the two outer ones "refused," *i.e.*, placed cornerwise, the centre one alone coming up to the front. The doors of all three cupboards are inlaid with fine scrolls of Renaissance design and, generally, a flower vase in the centre. The upper frieze is also inlaid with scrolls. The stylobate, or lowest shelf, surmounts another frieze, which is usually inlaid, deeply, with a chequer-board or lozenge design, executed in bog-oak and holly. True English inlay and marquetry were always effected in natural woods, unstained with acid, as in Dutch work, nor were ivory or bone or ebony employed by British cabinet-makers. We shall go into this matter more fully in a later chapter, in treating of the marquetry era of English furniture.

CHAPTER VII

THE LOUIS XIII TRANSITION

THE style we call Louis XIII holds in France approximately the same position as does the Tudor style in England. The latter connected Gothic to Elizabethan (English Renaissance), the former was the connecting link between the Franco-Flemish Renaissance and the "grand style" of Louis XIV. Thus both were transitional.

Louis XIII, himself, was a weakling, a puppet king ruled by his beautiful wife, Anne of Austria, on one side, and the great Cardinal-Duke of Richelieu on the other, not to mention his favorite "*mignons*", d'Epernon and others. Moreover, or perhaps it was the cause of his curious character, he was extremely bigoted, narrow-minded, and selfish.

The so-called Louis XIII style was chiefly an importation from an Italy dominated by a strong religious feeling, upheld by the militant order of Jesuits. In France, the architectural mode of the period, of which the church of St. Roch, on the rue St. Honore in Paris, is one of the purest speci-

mens, is called the Jesuit style, and it is easy to understand how it came to be so firmly established in France, when we consider that the mother of the king, Louis XIII, was Marie de Medicis, that her great minister, Cardinal Mazarin, was also an Italian, and that Italy in the 17th century was in the maelstrom of a fast-descending decadence, both artistic and political. The "baroque" style was created in Italy by Borromini and Bernini and spread all over Europe like a veritable plague of bad taste, acquiring unaccountable popularity everywhere.

Consequently, as in those days, the monarch's environment and leanings were reflected in the furniture, we find Louis XIII style pieces (Plate XVI, a), cramped, finicky, lacking in any outstanding feature, and what is not a debasement of Renaissance types is a poor attempt at something new, a characterless Louis XIV. The chairs, always the barometer of furniture modes, were either of the type which we adopted later as Cromwellian (Plate XVI, b) or the absolutely rectangular high-back Louis XIV kind (Plate XVII), but with the H-stretcher, and generally upholstered in leather or cut-velvet of Genoa or Venice. In the former type the front stretcher is turned—as a rule, spirally—and there are often two bars one above the other. The stretchers are

much finer, less heavy, than the English Cromwellian type. They are also in walnut, whereas those of the English ones are in oak. The leather chairs are skimpy and high in proportion to their width, while the leather, plain or embossed, was fastened to the framework with ornamental brass-headed nails. The arm-supports of these Louis XIII (Cromwellian) chairs were rarely turned spirally, even when the front and side stretcher and the legs were ornamented in this manner. But the majority of them were either bulb turned, or in the form of bobbins, throughout.

In the "finer" chairs the arm-supports were generally carved busts or full-length figures in contemporary costume, to be seen in the pictures of, *e.g.*, Sir Peter Lely. English Cromwellian chairs did not become the fashion until the end of Charles Ist's reign and the beginning of the Cromwellian period (1649-1660), consequently genuine pieces now found have simply turned supports, instead of busts of the despised nobility. An occasional, very rare, piece of the end of Charles Ist's reign may be met with here and there, but it behooves the purchaser to make very sure of its pedigree and the authenticity of both the chair and its pedigree before acquiring it. The form of these chairs is partly Spanish, partly Italian, for

Anne of Austria, the wife of Louis XIII, was a Spanish Hapsburg.

Away from the influence of the Court, more vigor is immediately perceptible. Normandy produced four-door cupboards, each door having four small moulded *square* panels inset. Gascony set its panels on the point, *diamond-wise*, but still square in shape. Sometimes it split the diamonds into four triangles when they were known as "*à pointes de gâteaux.*" Burgundy produced the square panel, but cut each corner off in a quarter-circle. Its tables had spirally turned legs, finished by moulded level turning about two-thirds down.

Lorraine, in tables, used the double cross of Lorraine with bun feet, and turned, moulded, pendents at each corner.

Cherry-wood, apple and many other rustic and fruit woods were used in the provinces, but in Paris at the Court and the houses of the nobles, when walnut was not employed, a veneer—never on spirally-turned pieces—of ebony, suiting the sombre character of the King, was fashionable. This veneer of a very valuable wood was generally attached to the cheapest of wood carcases, *e.g.*, beech or birch. It was from the use of ebony that the term for a master cabinet-maker came to be—toward the end of the 17th century—

PLATE XXXVII, a.—LOUIS XVI COMMODE SUPERBLY ENRICHED WITH "ORMOLU." NOTE HUSK-PATTERN FILLINGS ON LEGS. (See page 262)

PLATE XXXVII, b.—SUPPLE LOUIS XVI OVAL-BACKED CHAIR OF FINE QUALITY. NOTE DETAILS. (See page 262)

PLATE XXXVIII.—LOUIS XVI "BUREAU À-CYLINDRE" WITH TWELVE LEGS. (See page 262)

Maître-ébéniste," but the use put by Charles André Boulle under Louis XIV to this wood may have had even more to do with it.

Taken all in all, the Louis XIII style is uninteresting, produced nothing new, and generally followed the line of least resistance, as did the King himself.

The illustrations to this chapter will explain more than one can in words, and we pass with pleasure to the logical child of this French style, *viz.*, the English Jacobean.

CHAPTER VIII

JACOBEAN (STUART) AND CROMWELLIAN STYLES

In the first decade, at least, of the 17th century, Jacobean furniture was little else than a debased Elizabethan style plus influences from "foreign parts," chiefly France, for Charles I (1625-1649) married Henrietta Maria, sister of Louis XIII. No little importance is attached to such historical events in the course of this book—though the majority of writers prefer to treat each country and its styles as independent entities—because it must be evident to any student of the meaning of "style" or "mode" that it was the ruling classes which fixed them. *Ergo*, the marriages, intermarriages and decrees made by these ruling classes could but be a decisive factor in the establishment of an enduring type—enduring, that is to say, until another dynasty, another and a stronger power, with its own beliefs and traditions, caused a change of type which, while it lasted, was as perfect in style and workmanship as the craftsmen of the time could devise.

The first of the Stuart sovereigns, James VI of Scotland and I of England (1603-1625), who "never said a foolish thing and never did a wise one"— was a weak-kneed, bigoted, Protestant monarch, son of the Catholic Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots. He married Anne of Denmark in 1589. Furniture attributed especially to his reign is very distinctly French-Italian in style, but with the exception of a rare piece here and there, we doubt whether much of this furniture was made in England. It bears all the ear-marks of Italian or Franco-Italian fabrication.

True Jacobean furniture, as we know and love it, was, up to 1660, made of oak,—after which walnut became fashionable,—and at least up to 1689, was, as we have said, largely a debased form of Elizabethan. This refers particularly to large pieces, *e.g.*, court and press cupboards and tables. But a number of new types, such as gate-leg tables, tridarns (Welsh dressers), chairs and tables with spirally-turned legs, and the late developments of the wainscot chair, to which we have devoted a short special chapter, were also introduced.

The Jacobean period, as the term is generally used, includes not only the reigns of James I and Charles I, but the Cromwellian Protectorate (1649-1660), the reigns of Charles II (Restoration or

Carolean (1660-1685) and that of James II (1685-1689) in which furniture is transitional.

Now let us examine the changes which took place upon the death of Elizabeth, or rather in the year or two preceding her decease, and the first years of James Ist's reign. We have seen how the fine carving of the early years of the Elizabethan era had already degenerated into strap-work and gouge-carving, even

FIGS. 34 35 36 37 38 39 40.

in the course of her reign. It became still worse during that of her successor, for, curiously enough, in an English sovereign, his intellectual interest ran toward literature rather than to the graphic or applied arts. It may even be said that no British sovereign up to that time, with the possible exception of the Saxon, Alfred, had shown such aptitude for letters as this Scot, James I. His wife, a Dane, was a native of a country having no great art traditions, and so furniture design fell for a time into a marasma, like

that in Italian painting, between the death of Giotto and the rise of Masaccio. In both cases, craftsmen and artists, respectively, simply permitted themselves to copy or adapt slightly the work of their predecessors, with the result that, in furniture, a recrudescence of the easier craft of turning, and a consequent descent in the quality of design, as such —even in comprehension of the origins of earlier motives—took place to the detriment of the art of wood-carving. One writer goes so far as to place exact dates upon the various forms of turned legs which became the fashion. He lists them as follows:

* Bulb-turned, 1575-1650 (Fig. 34).
Column-turned, 1590-1700 (Fig. 35).
Bobbin-turned, 1640-1665 (Fig. 36).
Vase-turned, 1645-1710 (Fig. 37).
Baluster-turned, 1645-1710 (Fig. 38).
Spiral-turned, 1660-1703 (Fig. 39).
Inverted-cup-turned, 1689-1705 (Fig. 40).

But this fixing of dates is obviously incorrect. Leaving the first three categories unquestioned, for the range of years allowed to each is sufficiently wide to give them vagueness, we find spiral turning as only

** The bulb-turning and bobbin-turning, as well as the baluster form were simply adaptations of typical Renaissance motives. The first two were reproductions on a larger scale of the bead, and bead-and-piastre, motives (cf. Figs. 34, 36, with the bead motives on Plate V). Columnar turning came from the Henri II Tuscan column; the baluster from the French type of balustrade.*

coming in, circa 1660. The author of such a statement cannot have been aware of the essential difference between the *lathe-turned* spiral, which we find in the contemporary reigns of Louis XIII of France and Charles I of England, and through the Commonwealth, *i.e.*, between the years 1610 and 1660, and the *hand-carved* spiral twist (Fig. 41), which came to us from China, via Bombay, part of the dowry brought by Catherine of Braganza to Charles II. Nor did the spiral *twist* survive the reign of Charles II (d. 1685), when it gave place to the long spindle which is a feature of James II and William-and-Mary back-uprights. Spiral-*turning* is occasionally found in William-and-Mary furniture, but in such cases, it may be counted for certain either that the piece was made in Holland, or, if in England, in some workshop employing a Dutch foreman. The quality of the workmanship should be the criterion here, for Dutch craftsmen in furniture were always careless, particularly in the unseen portions of the carcase, while the one thing with which we can never reproach old English furniture is bad workmanship, even down to the smallest details of finish of the carcase work. Later we shall see how this very point enables us to distinguish English from Dutch pieces

Fig. 41.

at a time when apparently there were few external differences.

As for the inverted-cup-turned leg, it was nothing more than a simplification, by turning, of the pedestal leg, in vogue in France, brought to England by Louis XIVth's favorite cabinet-maker, Daniel Marot, who escaped to Holland on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) and thence came to England in the train of William of Orange. It did not survive the reigns of William III and his Queen, Mary Stuart; in other words, it went out, as a style, before 1702.

Of course we know that pieces having certain popular features were made even after their popularity had waned among those who set the styles, but to carry the inverted-cup-leg into the year 1705 is to class it among Queen Anne style pieces which is obviously absurd.

In the reign of all the Stuart sovereigns down to that of James II, we find the press-cupboard holding its own. The court cupboard—which was, after all, but an adaptation to Renaissance forms of the Gothic *credenza* (see comparative plate XVIII) did not survive long, but the press-cupboard with the lower portion also enclosed—for use as a linen-press—was made right through the 17th century, though its form changed. The "cup-and-cover" bulb support

first became thinner (Fig. 42), losing its original character altogether; then it gave place to turned "vases" and even at times "balusters," and finally, toward the end of the century, disappeared altogether, and was replaced by "drop pendents" at each end of the upper cornice. (Fig. 43.)

Fig. 42.

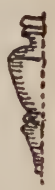


Fig. 43.

Similarly, the canted side-cupboards of the upper section soon went out of fashion (about 1610), and, with rare exceptions, were brought up to an alignment with the centre cupboard. The artistic contours of the Elizabethan article were lost altogether in an uninteresting rectangular object of material utility.

Later, the lower cupboard portion was turned into a set of drawers, giving the whole piece a hybrid appearance which adds neither to its beauty nor its value.

Tables were mostly of either the refectory or the gate-leg form. The refectory table of the Jacobean style was in the early days a "poor cousin" of the handsomely-decorated Elizabethan. It still had the cup-and-cover bulbous leg, but the bulb was smaller, the division between the "cup" and the "cover" came nearer to, and finally reached, the centre of the entire

bulb, and the meaning of the original ornament, once again, as in the case of the linen-fold, was lost. At first, also, the four corner legs of the Elizabethan style remained popular, but as these refectory tables were very narrow, their makers soon realised that one leg at each end, connected with a long stretcher, was all that was necessary. Furthermore, and probably the most important factor in the change, the wide-spreading skirts (farthingales) of the 17th century, made the four-leg tables uncomfortable. There are, of course, numbers of so-called genuine refectory tables, with the four legs, and also a few *really* genuine ones. For the distinction, study the stretcher for signs of wear, and the under-side of the top.

Good refectory tables often have below the top a carved "apron" approximately 4" deep, carved with various designs. A favorite pattern was the triangular bunch of grapes, combined with the triangular vine-leaf, each combination of grapes and leaf forming an oblong. Other popular patterns were a row of contiguous half-circles, each carved with a flower motive inside, or of circles running into each other (*guilloche* style) executed in very low-relief carving.

In the later tables, after c. 1610, bulb-turned, and then baluster legs took the place of the "cup-and-

cover" bulb, even in its modified Jacobean form. In regard to the genuineness of these tables, many of the methods of detection specified in the chapter on Elizabethan furniture still hold good. But in regard to the stretcher, some new points may be noted. Firstly, these tables were in one piece, yet not too heavy to move about, so that first one side, then the other would be used by the members of the household. Also, that they were very narrow and so the stretcher was quite close to the feet. Thus there will be on *both* sides of these stretchers signs of rubbing and wear, *irregular*, *of course*, *in genuine untouched pieces.*

Chairs of this period were both more numerous in type, and catered more to the comfort of the user, than in the earlier periods, principally on account of the strong foreign influence, which gave them birth. We find up to the death of Charles I (1649) a new type of caned-back and cane-seated chair with spirally-*turned* legs and back uprights and the frame of the seat chip-carved into a sort of laurel band. The backs of these early Charles I chairs are almost square —which distinguishes them from those of the Restoration (Charles II) style which were high in proportion to their width—the back was still perpendicular, and the front stretcher was a parallel band (circa 4"

deep) running horizontally across the front legs about two-thirds up from the ground to the seat, as in the more decorative Louis XIII chairs which inspired them. This band was carved into heavyish foliage scrolls, in clumsy openwork, but so slightly pierced that it looks almost solid. The cresting or top rail of the back was treated in the same manner as the front stretcher. The other legs were held together by an H-stretcher spirally turned. The H-stretcher is a typical Louis XIII feature (see Chapter X).

Charles I chairs were made of oak. Those of Charles II were generally of walnut, and more brilliantly carved, in consequence. The original caning of Charles I chairs was coarse and of a big mesh. That of Charles II pieces was finer and closer, while in the William-and-Mary style, the mesh is very small and tightly drawn; in short, the later the caning, the tighter it is, when the original caning is still on the chair, which is not often.

There were other chairs in vogue at this time, and indeed throughout the Jacobean period, *e.g.*, the Yorkshire or Derbyshire chairs (Fig. 44), all wood, with no caning, generally inspired directly by the Italian Renaissance, Florentine and Brescian types. But the legs are always turned,—whereas in Italian chairs of the time they are square,—and the finials

at the ends of the back uprights are carved into scrolls, *always* turned inwards facing each other, or placed back to back. In Italian chairs, the finial is a parallel-sided acanthus leaf *always* facing to the front. On the back uprights of this type of chair we find that very popular ornament of Jacobean days, the "split-spindle," *i.e.*, a turned Dutch spindle, split in half and applied to the stiles of chairs, cupboards, commodes, in fact, almost any object of furniture having flat-surface side or centre stiles.

(Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

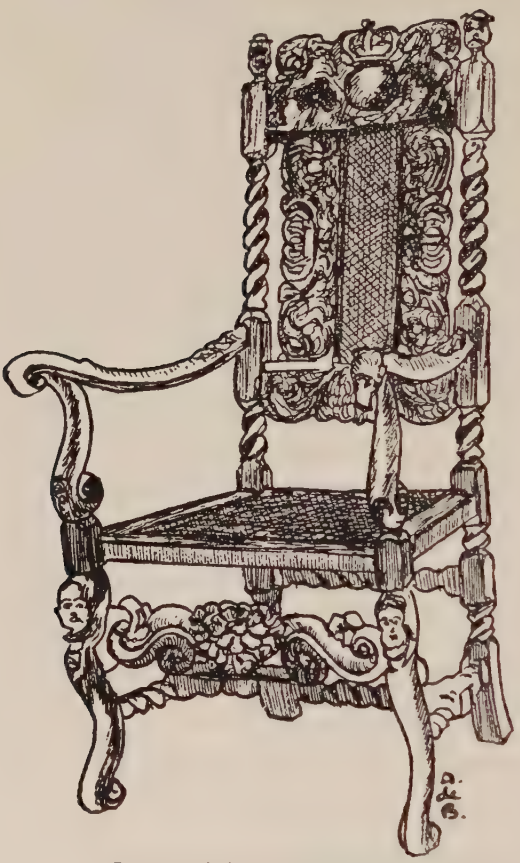
FIG. 44.

In the Cromwellian period (1649-1660), austerity of every sort having become the rule, the "cavalier" chairs of cane and carving, were either put away in garrets, or *destroyed* as "works of the devil." And this destruction of early decorative furniture both deliberately by the Puritans in power, and accidentally, during the siege and bombardment of Cavalier mansions in the struggle between Charles I and Cromwell, *e.g.*, Holmby House, is another important point to remember in collecting, for it still further reduced

the small number of genuine pieces extant today. As a matter of exact fact, the far larger proportion of so-called Charles I chairs today are Charles II products. Some have been transformed, some left as they were, but wrongly attributed. And finally, a considerable number of them are not English at all, but French. But the wood—oak or walnut—and the joints of the legs and stretchers should decide this last question. In French chairs the spirals meet, whereas in English chairs they join in a squared block.

The so-called Cromwellian chair (see Plate XVI b), again a Louis XIII type, is often called, when without arms, a "farthingale" chair. The seat is always rather high, upholstered in plain leather for the men and in velvet with a braid edging for the women. The arms are horizontal, parallel, and spirally-turned, as are the legs which are connected by an H-stretcher. There is also a spirally-turned bar as a front stretcher. The arms, legs, and arm-supports are most frequently, in England, also turned spirally. French Louis XIII pieces, or copies of them, even when made in England, *prior to the Commonwealth*, have generally two stretchers in front, above, and very close to, each other. And the wood-work generally is not so heavy as in English Cromwellian chairs.

The Restoration of Charles II, recalled by General Monk from his retreat at Breda in Holland in 1660—marked a new era of brilliant cabinet-making for the court and favorite men and women of the Merry Monarch. Puritanism, following on the unpardonable crime of regicide, had disgusted England with the hypocritical, psalm-singing, Roundhead party, and the return of the son of Charles I was hailed with wild enthusiasm. This frenzy of delight, translated into terms of furniture, was expressed by



(Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

FIG. 45.

Note the crown at the top and sides. None is placed on the stretcher for it would not be right to risk having feet placed on the royal crown!

the use of the closed royal crown everywhere in the carved decoration of chairs, frequently as many as six on one chair. (Fig. 45.) But this enthusiasm did not last long, when the people and even many of the court nobles discovered that the throne, in the eyes of Charles II, was more a means of making up for his years of exile and poverty by indulging himself and his favorites, than an elevation from which to better the condition of his subjects. And in 1665, came the Great, the awful, Plague, followed the next year by the Great Fire which destroyed half the city—still another reason for the scarcity of very early furniture—while in 1667, for the first time in many centuries, the sailing of a foreign fleet—the Dutch, under van Ruyter—up the Medway, threatened London itself. Furthermore, there was spread about a persistent rumor that, through his intimacy with Louise de la Quérouaille, later Duchess of Portsmouth, Charles II, ruler of Protestant England, had sold himself to the Catholic Louis XIV of France, and signed a secret treaty against the impoverished Stadhouder of Protestant Holland, fighting against all the might of France for the liberty of religious thought in his valiant Dutch and Flemish provinces. The thought of the existence of such a treaty annoyed the British people exceedingly, and led to an

immediate expression of dislike for everything French.

In furniture all these events found their echo in changes of design: First the crown disappeared off chairs, or was less enthusiastically repeated on the same chair; then c. 1670 French motives—including the Louis XIV shell—went the same way, to give place to a more Flemish type of scrolls and spindles.

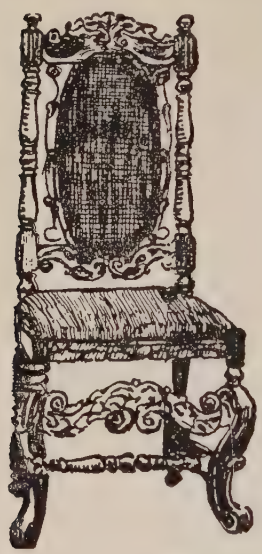


FIG. 46, a.—VERY LATE CHARLES II OR EARLY JAMES II CHAIR.

Charles II chairs of the early period, even those which were not decorated with crowns, were beautiful objects, with their *twisted* columns and legs, their high back with a narrow oblong or a long oval of caning, their chip-carved seat frames, and their handsomely-carved and undercut upper cresting and front stretcher, which in genuine pieces are identical in design. Later, in place of the twisted front leg, with its square blocks where the stretchers join, a Flemish scroll or a curious design of reversed flat curves was used. It was turned to the front, as in Fig. 45. At the end of the reign, the leg began to be placed

(*Metropolitan Museum.*)

PLATE XLIII, a.—EARLY ADAM SIDE-TABLE WITH TEN LEGS. (See page 274)

PLATE XLIII, b.—ADAM MIRROR WITH TYPICAL WIRY SPIRALS. (See page 276)

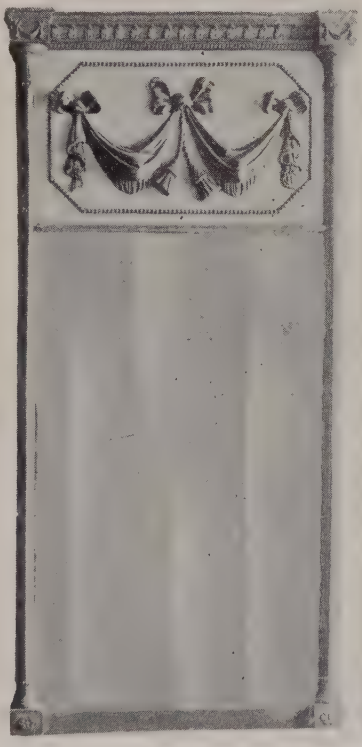


PLATE XLIII, c.—ADAM MIRROR OF THE LATER PERIOD. (See page 276)

(*Metropolitan Museum*)

PLATE XLVII.—A FRENCH EMPIRE CHAIR WHICH SERVED AS A MODEL FOR SHERATON EXCEPT IN THE CARVING ON THE SEAT-RAIL. (See page 294)

cornerwise, thus presaging the advent of the Dutch cabriole leg of the 18th century (Fig. 46, a), while the twist uprights gave place to long spindles.

But, as already mentioned, purchasers must be careful to distinguish between the "turned spiral" leg or support or stretcher, and the "twisted" type of the same parts. The latter are not only more graceful and beautiful than the former, but fetch a much higher price in the market. The "spiral turning" was machine-made, that is to say, turned spirally on the lathe and therefore is absolutely regular—or nearly so—with concave and convex portions as nearly equal as possible. And it was in oak as a general rule. The "spiral twist" is hand-carved with the hollow bigger than the convex surfaces, and almost always slightly *undercut*. The origin of the two types of spirals is entirely different, the twist being Eastern. It came in some thirty years later than the *turned* spiral which it supplanted altogether in purely English pieces. As regards regularity, there was always a slight "plunge" in early lathes, which put turned pieces out of centre.

Gate-leg tables with oval tops and *twist* legs are much besought, but genuine examples are extremely rare. Charles II chairs almost always had "twist" uprights at the back, and in the early part of the reign

"twist" legs and stretchers. French-made examples have the "twists" running into each other, in the stretchers, but the purely English piece usually has a square block at the joints to facilitate matters.

In regard to cabinets and cupboards, there were two types, one evidently for the wealthy nobles, the other more of a burgess type. The former consisted of magnificent black, or sometimes red-and-gold lacquer, square cabinets, some with large ornamentally pierced hardware hinges, generally on a gilded, or silvered, stand in the style of Grinling Gibbons. (Plate XIX, a.) Later, the cabinet stood upon a Daniel Marot pedestal-leg silvered stand, with four legs to the front and two at the back, in the reign of William III, but neither kind is of a high grade of art for they are both pretentious and ill-assorted, the silvered stands being totally unsuited to the lacquer cabinet they supported. (Plate XIX, b.)

Moreover the elaborate carving of the silvered and gilded stands into "swags" of flowers with Italianate *amorini*—what are commonly called "cupids"—was heavy and in bad taste. It is more than probable that the first lacquer cabinets were direct importations from Japan, for the art was unknown in England till the reign of Charles II. These early "real" lacquer pieces have a thick lustrous lacquer,

made up of numerous layers of the true lacquer varnish (*Rhus Vernicifera*), while the gilded decorations in very low relief, on a lacquer and gum-arabic foundation, are solidly attached and do not chip off.

But in 1688, John Stalker published his "Treatice of Japanning and Varnishing. Being a compleat (!) discovery of those Arts. With the best way of making all sorts of varnish for Japan, Woods, Prints, Plate or Pictures. The method of Guilding, Burnishing and Lackering with the art of Guilding, Separating and Refining metals, and the most curious (!) ways of Painting, on Glass or otherwise." Also rules for counterfeiting "Tortoise-shell and Marble, and for staining or dying (!) wood, ivory, etc., etc."

Stalker declared that the "Art of Japanning made buildings like our bodies (!!) impregnable against time or weather, or corrosion or fire. True, genuine Japan, like the Salamander, lives in the flames, and stand unalterable," with more in a similar vein, which proves that the art of convincing advertising is no new invention of these distinctly commercial times in which we live.

Unfortunately Stalker and his school did not use true lacquer at all, but a sort of lamp-black varnish put on in one or two coats and used on un-

prepared woods, usually birch or beech, not at all suited to it. The gilded ornament also is customarily found to be painted with a copper imitation of gilt—not gold leaf—over a *red* painted composition of *gesso* (plaster) which in old pieces is almost completely chipped off as in the Queen Anne secretaire-commode at the Metropolitan Museum. The reason for this is, primarily, that the relief of the figures, and so forth, in English imitations of real lacquer, was too high, and not securely attached to a grounding of lacquer, as in true Japanese lacquer, but onto the wood itself, which could not hold it.

The art of marquetry was imported from Holland somewhere about 1675. It was an adaptation in veneer of the 16th century Italian Renaissance *intarsia* which was, however, inlay, not marquetry. Marquetry differs from "inlay" in that the former is simply a design let into a thin veneer, and of the same thickness, whereas "inlay" is let into the solid wood and may go to any depth. Consequently, inlay rarely comes out, whereas old marquetry, in time, almost invariably blisters and peels off.

Almost all large-surfaced pieces of walnut furniture were veneered with a knife-cut layer of this semi-precious wood over a carcase of deal, oak, or beech. Veneering is almost as old as the first build-

ings, and is said to have been used in the Temple of Solomon. It consists of covering the surface of a common wood with a more costly, more handsomely grained wood. At first, walnut veneer was much used, and laid on 1/16 to 1/8 of an inch thick, for the veneer material had to be cut out by hand, whereas machine-cut veneer is rarely thicker than 1/32 to 1/64 of an inch. Veneering was no process of trickery, no attempt to deceive. It simply provided a beautiful, easily-worked, surface to a sturdy ground of plainer wood. Where a piece of veneer has peeled off, look for circular saw marks, if it is very thin. Veneering in the reigns of Charles II and James II was confined to flat surfaces, such as the tops of tables, dressers, commodes, while the legs, spiral uprights, and the carved stretchers and crestings were of solid walnut.

Day-beds became very fashionable in the reign of the former monarch and were almost always made of solid walnut. They are long caned seats with six or eight legs, and a back piece, canted at a flat, obtuse angle to the seat. Between the legs on the sides are either reproductions of crowned chair crestings, or pairs of Flemish "S" or broken "S" scrolls. The cresting on the top of the back piece followed the fashion of the chairs. Genuine Charles II day-beds are very rare and fetch high prices.

James II, Duke of York and High Admiral of England, during his brother Charles' reign, only occupied the throne from 1685-1689, when he fled to St. Germain as the guest of Louis XIV, and was the rallying point for the plots of various "Pretenders" against the Anglo-Dutch régime and the succeeding House of Hanover.

This four-year period was in truth a time of transition with nothing remarkable to illustrate it. The reason for this lay in the continual disturbances occurring within the kingdom itself, the ever-increasing hatred between the "Papists," headed by the Catholic king himself and his satellite judge, "Bloody Jeffries," and the Protestants, and the personal dislike the people of England had always entertained for the austere, grumbling, brother of the gay Charles.

James II furniture has still the crestings and front stretchers of identical design at first, after which the stretcher was replaced by a turned spindle generally with a round knob in the centre. The twisted back-uprights were also replaced by long turned spindles which are a feature of typical William-and-Mary chairs.

The one really important innovation brought about in furniture by the accession of James II was

the eagle, which, as a decorative motive, continued in favor for close upon fifty years. It came to us through the second marriage of the king, for whom Louis XIV of France, always his friend, chose an Italian princess of the ancient house of Este, Mary of Modena-Este. The marriage took place in 1673. The coat-of-arms of the Estensi is a black spread-eagle, and we find this eagle not only reproduced "in the round" but conventionalized as key and handle-plates on both English and American furniture from about 1685 up to the late 18th century.

With the reign of James II, the true Stuart line came to an end, and the Dutch "usurper"—who, however, was called over by the British themselves—married to Princess Mary, a daughter of James II, ascended the throne. It was in their reign (1689-1702) that was formed the style we know as "William-and-Mary," the subject of a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER IX

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WAINSCOT CHAIR

We saw in Chapter VI how, as early as the reign of Henry VIII of England, the walls of important mansions were "celyd with wenskett," *i.e.*, sealed or covered with wainscotting.

The wainscot chair, in its original form, was essentially a product of the late Tudor and early Stuart (Jacobean) period of history. Its ancestor was the so-called "Glastonbury" chair (Plate XX), a kind of "fald-stool" or folding chair, in which such Renaissance features as the "guilloche" or meander, and bead motives, bordering a semi-circular arch or pair of arches, commingle—in the earlier types—with late Gothic ornament, as in the chair at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

The word "wainscot" is derived from a Dutch word "*wagenschott*," meaning, roughly, carriage-panel wood, and found in invoices for extra-well-grained and seasoned oak, susceptible of a high degree of polish, as required for the carriage-panels of the nobility and gentry of the day. From "*wagen-*

schott"—nobody, well-, or ill-educated, knew anything about spelling until well in the 18th century—it degenerated to "*weynscott*," then "*weinscot*," and from that to its present spelling was but a step.

As we have said, the Glastonbury chair was the direct ancestor of the wainscot chair, but the former was a monastic piece of furniture—said to have been used by the abbots of venerable Glastonbury, where tradition has it that Joseph of Arimathea settled in England—whereas the wainscot chair proper was distinctly a secular object, replacing the Gothic *chayère*. Thus it took on—as the main seat of the manorial hall—the dignity bequeathed to it by its defunct predecessor, as the seat of "lordship," with all that word implied in those early days.

Its real birth—as a wainscot chair—occurred about the beginning of the second half of the 16th century, and from then onwards, a logical development of its form, and even its ornamentation, is clearly traceable, if—we repeat—the difference between *period* and *style* is remembered. The failure to make this distinction is responsible for much of the confusion which is rampant among dealers and even experts as to the styles of the various types of wainscot chair. One noted writer, an authority on English furniture, contradicts himself three times in as many

pages of his book, regarding this particular matter.

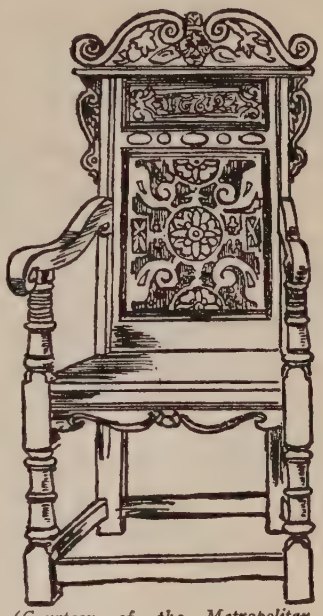
The "detecting" of the real *style* date—the actual date may be fifty years later—is simplicity itself if one bears in mind the influences at work in England between 1550 and 1625 A.D.

For example, the Elizabethan style, as we have already stated, was but an English adaptation of the Italian Renaissance. Now Italian chairs of that wonderful era invariably had finials at the summit of each back upright. Generally, they were in the form of a highly-conventionalised straight-edged acanthus leaf, *turned to the front.* So, we find finials in Elizabethan chairs. Consequently, the carved top-rail had to be placed *between* the uprights of the back, for, obviously, if it had been placed across those uprights—as it was, we shall see, later—it would have eliminated a distinctive feature of the original model, *viz.:* the finials.

Fig. 46, b.

Therefore, we can say, definitely, that all true Elizabethan—*i.e.*, 1558-1603—wainscot chairs have their crested top rail between the uprights. (Fig. 46, b.) We shall be able to "check" this point by other features of the period mentioned farther on in this chapter.

Then, as late Gothic ornaments disappeared altogether, and Elizabeth—as we have seen—showed clearly her interest in Flemish craftsmen, two S-shaped Flemish scrolls came to be employed as a cresting, particularly during the reign of her immediate successor, James I. The cutting off of the finials widened slightly the length of the cresting, but the proportionate Flemish scrolls were still too long for the width and, so, had to be raised up against each other, which was not only incorrect but bad art. (Plate XXI.)



(Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)

FIG. 47.

Thus the cresting-bar, which, after the elimination of the finials, ran the full length of the chair-back, became lengthened, projecting beyond the uprights, in order that the scrolls might lie flat, as they should. But as this extension left an ugly rectangular projection outside the stiles on either side, first small, then larger, "hackets" or ear-pieces, were inserted into these angles, tapering ornamentally down to the outside edges of the stiles. Late in

the 17th century, wainscot chairs were made with hackets which came almost down to the arm (Fig. 47), and sometimes even reached them.

Now at the same time, other features corroborate our dating. In Elizabethan and James I wainscot chairs, the arms are horizontal, the seat is square, the back is rigidly upright and the stretcher is on or very near the ground. In Elizabeth's reign this last was sometimes inlaid with a lozenge-shaped chequer-board design, similar to that of the court cupboards.

Later, the arms began to droop downwards and to spread outwards, as the seat became wider in front than at the back. The arms, also, in the later chairs became thinner and serpentine, obviously to give more room for the farthingale skirt in fashion.

This was the time when chairs began to assume their present status as objects of comfort, and to lose a great deal of their pristine dignity as "seats of the mighty," or from which justice, high and low, was administered.

The panelled back, however, always remained the main feature of the wainscot chair, though as the years flew by, the beautiful carving of the late Tudor and early Jacobean epoch was abandoned in favor of a poor type of "gouge" or "chip" carving in which the carver even attempted to reproduce such effects

as the complicated "guilloche" or meander motive. A child's chair, and parts of the upper section of a fine court-cupboard, in the Metropolitan Museum, exemplify this debasement of taste and craftsmanship.

Now many wainscot chairs are extant, which bear dates carved upon the higher portion of the back below the cresting, and which seem to contradict the evolutionary laws we have described above. These dates, however, mean nothing but that the chair was made in the year given, just as we could make a Gothic *chayère* today and comprise in its design the figure 1929. It would not be Gothic period, though it might be Gothic style.

Most of the dated wainscot chairs, moreover, were made in the provincial towns in England and Wales, and out-of-date, almost always, when the date conflicts with style types.

We are safe in considering the true Elizabethan wainscot-chair as one with the cresting between the finials; with Renaissance inlay or carving in the back-panel; with square-sectioned, simple, horizontal arms; with the back absolutely vertical, and with the stretcher placed very low, on, or close to, the ground. This type remained in fashion until about three years after the death of the great Queen. After that we must use our own judgment regarding

the date of its *style*, even though its actual date of manufacture be plainly carved on its panelling. The length of the ear-pieces, or hackets, when genuine, and not restorations, are the most precious of date indicators. The bigger and deeper they are, the later the date of the chair. Then look for corroborations in the shape of the seat, the line and section of the arms, and the quality of the carving. Wainscot chairs, of the later more comfortable types, were made up to the end of the 17th century, but after 1685—at any rate—they were completely at variance with the prevailing modes in other forms of furniture and were rarely used save in country mansions.

CHAPTER X

LOUIS XIV AND THE "GRAND STYLE"

THE famous saying of Louis XIV, "*L'état, c'est moi!*" which can be, very freely, translated as "*I* am France" is almost invariably taken out of its context. Yet it explains why the styles of the 17th and 18th centuries in France bore the name of the succeeding sovereigns rather than of the period, as in the Renaissance and before. On March 10, 1661, Cardinal Mazarin, successor *de facto* if not *de jure* of Richelieu, and who for eighteen years had held in his hands the reins of government, having been dead one day, Harlay de Chanvallon, president of the Council of the Clergy, asked the young King—Louis XIV was twenty-three years old at the time—to whom he should now apply for orders. Louis, profiting by the wise counsels of his former adviser, determined to rule in his own name from then on, and replied, "*L'état, c'est moi!*" or in another still freer translation, "Apply to me."

If we look at the various styles in furniture and other forms of art, we shall see that wherever the

monarch in whose reign they were formed was of outstanding strength—either personally or as the head of a powerful country—the styles became known by his name, because his influence upon them was predominant, generally through intelligent patronage of artists and artisans.

During the Renaissance, when the new movement was stronger than the strongest monarchs or pontiffs, we find *that* given as the name, with an occasional reference to a *François Premier* or a *Henri-Deux* style, after two of the most important art-loving sovereigns of the 16th century. The Louis XIII style would appear to be the exception which proves the rule, for that monarch was weak, bigoted, narrow-minded and cruel, and indeed in France, as we have said, except among the purists, there is no such thing as a "*style Louis XIII.*" It is simply considered as a debased Renaissance style, the product of foreign influences, a transition into the more virile mode of his son and successor, Louis the Great.

But previous to this Louis XIII style, the artistic productions in the fine and applied arts were known as being in the style of the Renaissance, both in France and Italy. The names of individual sovereigns in France and England, when used, were but sub-divisions, just as in the opposite direction, the

PLATE XLVIII.—PHILADELPHIA TYPE CHAIR, IN ORIGINAL CONDITION. NOTE FINISHED SCROLLS OF BACK AND COMPARE WITH PLATE XLIX. (See page 303)

PLATE XLIX.—REPRODUCTION OF AN ALMOST SIMILAR CHAIR TO PLATE XLVIII IN THE FLAT WITH THE CRUDEST OF CARVING. (See pages 303, 337)

PLATE L, a.—EARLY AMERICAN CHIP-CARVED CHEST-OF-DRAWERS, TYPICAL TULIP MOTIVE. c. 1650. (See page 309)

PLATE L, b.—EARLY AMERICAN (c. 1690) CUPBOARD-COMMODE WITH SAME MOULDINGS EVERYWHERE. CF. PLATE XXIII, b. (See pages 308, 309)

names of individual designers, *e.g.*, Daniel Marot, Berain, Watteau, Riesener, Roentgen, and so forth, were sometimes given as style names, subdividing the modes named after Louis XIV, XV, and XVI.

In England, during the Stuart dynasty régime, the general feeling of the whole succession ran toward the support of art by intelligent patronage of artists and craftsmen, and so the period is called Jacobean.

Cromwell and William of Orange both inspired personal styles, the former because of the strong simplicity of his Puritan ideas, the latter by his direct patronage, with that of his Dutch friends, of craftmen, either natives of Holland, or having taken refuge there, like Daniel Marot, after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 made it perilous, indeed, for a Huguenot to try to live in Paris, even though he were a favorite cabinet-maker to an all-powerful king. The Georges of England, being utterly devoid of artistic feeling, simply inspired a generic name for the styles of 1714 to 1745, *viz.*, Early Georgian, and, from then on, starting with Chippendale, a new fashion came in of giving to furniture the name of its designer, thereby indicating that the craftsman had, as it were, taken command, and himself formed the styles and the public

taste required for the absorption of their products; nor was this change altogether felicitous in its effects.

Now Louis XIV was, first and foremost, a monarch of great personality, with overweening pride, partly in himself, but chiefly in his country and the greatness of her name. "*L'état, c'est moi!*" Ambition for himself and for France, in the eyes of Louis XIV, and even of his people, were one and the same thing. France was forever delivered from the Italianism of the Medicis and their satellites, although it took some time for French artists and craftsmen to convince the king of the meretricious quality of the famous architect-sculptor, Giovanni Bernini (1589-1680), one of the builders of St. Peter's in Rome, and rejoicing at that time in the reputation of being among the leading artists of the day. Louis, who in 1661 had taken the title of the "*Roi-Soleil*," and risen so high in his own esteem as to consider himself a sort of "*vice-Dieu*," a vicegerent of God, had not been able to resist the temptation of inviting to France so outstanding a celebrity as Bernini.

Upon his arrival he requested him to design the termination of the palace of the Louvre on the side facing the old church of St. Germain-l'Auxerrois, whence had rung out the fatal tocsin of St. Bartholomew's Eve. But, in spite of Louis' love of the

ostentatious, the Italian was worsted in the contest by a Frenchman, Claude Perrault, whose plans, imposing as they are, clash terribly with the pure Renaissance inner court by Pierre Lescot, and break all rules of classic proportions with their double columns and strange inter-columniation.

As a consequence of this ambition to place his country in the forefront of the art world, and imbued with the knowledge that anything in the shape of pageantry, glitter, and show, makes a stronger and more direct appeal to the general public than the purer, more chaste forms, Louis XIV gathered around him the most brilliant artists he could find, principally among his own people. In 1662 he appointed the famous Jean Baptiste Colbert to be his Minister of Finance. Two years later he made him *Directeur des Bâtiments du Roi*, a title which carried with it the superintendence of public buildings, arts, and manufactures; and again, in 1669, entrusted him with charge of the French navy. In all these posts this far-seeing minister played an important rôle in the building up of the "Greater France"—but it was in his second post that he offers the deepest interest here, although as Minister of Finance he so accumulated the resources of his country that the royal treasury was enabled to pass safely through

a period of extravagant expenditures such as has rarely been equalled since the days of ancient Egypt and Imperial Rome.

Louis XIVth's love of display, however, showed itself too much in the ephemeral forms of pageantry and lavish entertainments to please the prudent Colbert, who was constantly forced to remonstrate with him, and on one occasion to write to his royal master:—"A useless meal costing three thousand *livres* inflicts upon me incredible suffering, for I consider it essential to refrain from all unnecessary expense in order that your Majesty may have millions to spend without stint whenever by doing so you may promote *your glory and the great name of France.*" (The italics are ours.)

Colbert, with his *protégé*, Charles LeBrun, was directly responsible for the renown of France in the realm of art, just as Richelieu had, in his time, done so much to promote the cause of literature and natural science by his foundation of the *Académie Française* (1632) and the *Jardin des Plantes*, respectively. In 1660, LeBrun, who, with the religious painter of the life of St. Bruno, Eustache Lesueur, was a pupil of Raphael's disciple, Simon Vouët, had painted a picture for Fontainebleau palace entitled the "Clemency of Alexander" which by its elaborate,

PLATE LI, a.—EARLY CARVED BIBLE-BOX OF NEW ENGLAND ORIGIN. c. 1690. (See page 309)

PLATE LI, b.—COFFER OVER DRAWER ON STAND. NEW ENGLAND. c. 1660. (See page 309)

PLATE LII.—DROP-LEAF WRITING-DESK. c. 1680. (See page 309)

rather grandiose, classicism made a strange appeal to Louis XIV, who loved to be portrayed in the armor and laurel-wreath of an ancient conqueror.

Two years later, LeBrun was appointed *Peintre du Roi*, the king's painter, in which capacity he decorated the famous Gallery of Apollo in the Louvre, so well-known to travellers as the hall in which the crown jewels of France are on exhibition. Colbert had seen LeBrun at work at the Château de Vaux, where the Minister's predecessor and employer, Nicholas Fouquet, had surpassed even the royal magnificence, and so brought about his own downfall. Colbert, having noted the artist's evident capabilities for enhancing his master's grandeur, caused him to receive the important appointment of director of the newly-acquired Gobelin tapestry works.

In this capacity, LeBrun exercised an incalculable influence over the art products of the entire reign, and in spite of the strictly academic manner in which he worked, his pictures are fascinating by their evident relation to the psychological feeling running throughout the kingdom during the reign of *le Grand Monarque*. LeBrun had one characteristic which will appeal to American readers. He was an inveterate worker, never yielding to flattery, nor desirous of exploiting to the full his high position.

Between the date of his appointment to the Gobelins and his death in 1690, he made the cartoons for nineteen sets of hangings, equal to no less than *17,153 yards (nearly 10 miles)* of tapestries, while he also painted an immense number of pictures, mostly portraits and battle subjects; supervised and even designed, in many cases, the decorations of the new palaces of Versailles, Marly, and St. Germain; drew up plans for a number of miscellaneous edifices, including such churches as St. Eustache,—facing the great markets in Paris,—the splendid Versailles fountains, the Porte St. Martin and Porte St. Denis,—the two gates of Paris, which still stand on the Boulevards—and even designed the superstructures of the great, brilliantly-decorated, ships of war for the new navy, as well as the royal plate; all this in addition to his routine work of overseeing the work of the Gobelin factory.

LeBrun also possessed the gift which the late Andrew Carnegie used to characterize as the essence of administrative genius, that of surrounding himself with capable assistants; and so we find working under his supervision not only his fellow-countrymen, but Flemish and Swiss and Italian artists and craftsmen, such as the famous Jean Jans and his son, who executed the great "Alexander"

series of tapestries; the painters Van der Meulen, specialist of pageant-like battle scenes, Monnoyer, the flower painter, Noel and Antoine Coypel; and such skilful craftsmen as Philippe Caffieri, the father of Jacques, the great metal-worker of Louis XV, and Coysevox, the sculptor; and a number of prominent cabinet-makers among whom the most important were, of course, Charles André Boulle and Daniel Marot.

Among the great designers who were associated with LeBrun, though not actually his employees, were the famous Le Paûtre and Jean Bérain. The latter's designs were usually light and airy (Fig. 48), something after the manner of the borders of Raphael's decorative panels in the Vatican, and the Psyche tapestries in the Metropolitan Museum, while those of LePaûtre were heavier in their leafy scroll-

FIG. 48.—PANEL BY JEAN BÉRAIN.

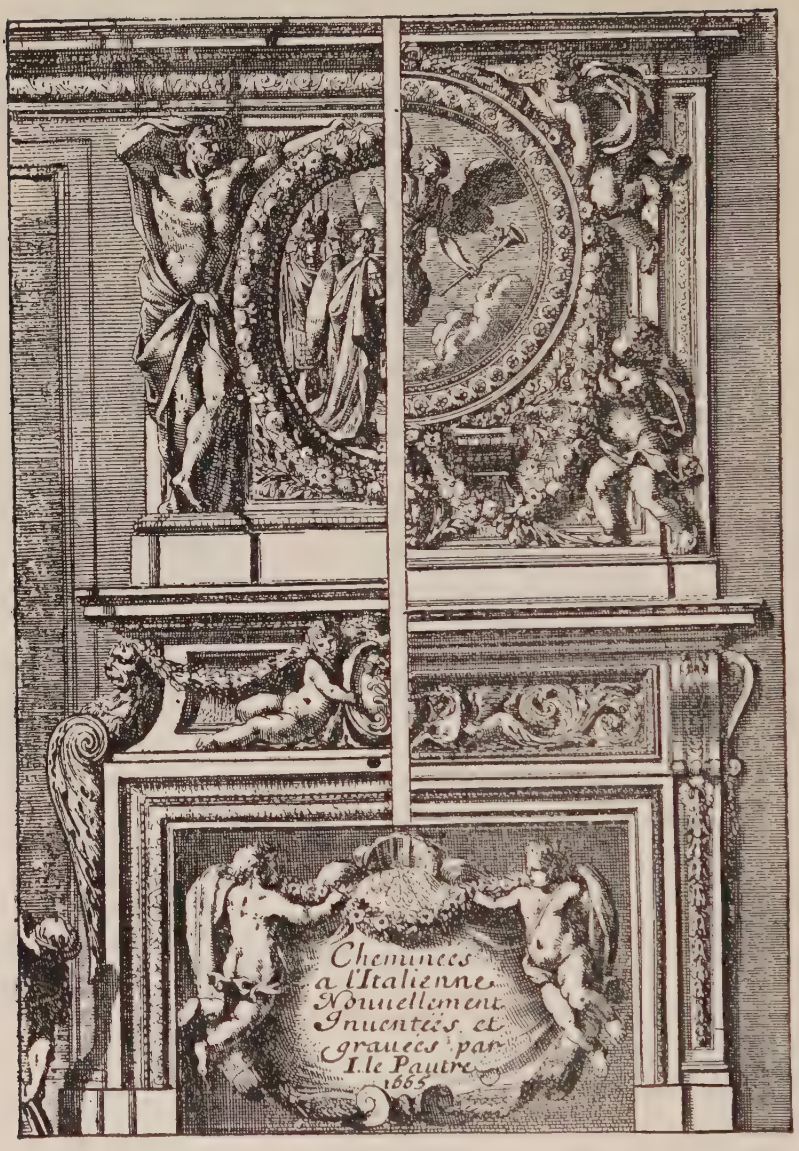


Fig. 49.—Mantelpiece Designs by Jean LePautre.

work, and in a way more in keeping with the general tendency of the period. (Fig. 49.)

Bérain favored the long-necked grotesques of Jacques du Cerceau, and his work was perhaps more truly French than that of LePaûtre who, in much of his frieze work, followed almost slavishly the work of the early Roman sculptors. It is unnecessary for us to say more about these two men, but we must stop for a moment with Daniel Marot, on account of the important part he played in the evolution of furniture design not only in France, but also in England. Daniel Marot revived the pedestal leg which had died away in France after a momentary appearance, *without a stretcher*, in the reign of Louis XIII, through the Italianate influence which prevailed at that time. But Marot saw the possibilities of its fine proportions and good lines, as had previously the 16th century Florentines, who had used it for many purposes, especially "*torchères*," and he made it the basis of his style.

The pure Daniel Marot leg is a square pedestal shape with an incut moulded neck, at the summit, a projecting ornamental moulding just below it and then a tapering shaft terminating in another projecting moulding or a gadrooned square foot. (Fig. 50.) And by the development of this type of leg and

its successors, one can place a date with almost mathematical precision on a Louis XIV chair. First, we find the absolutely rectilinear back, altogether devoid of any curves whatsoever, and completely upholstered. With it are pure rectilinear pedestal legs,

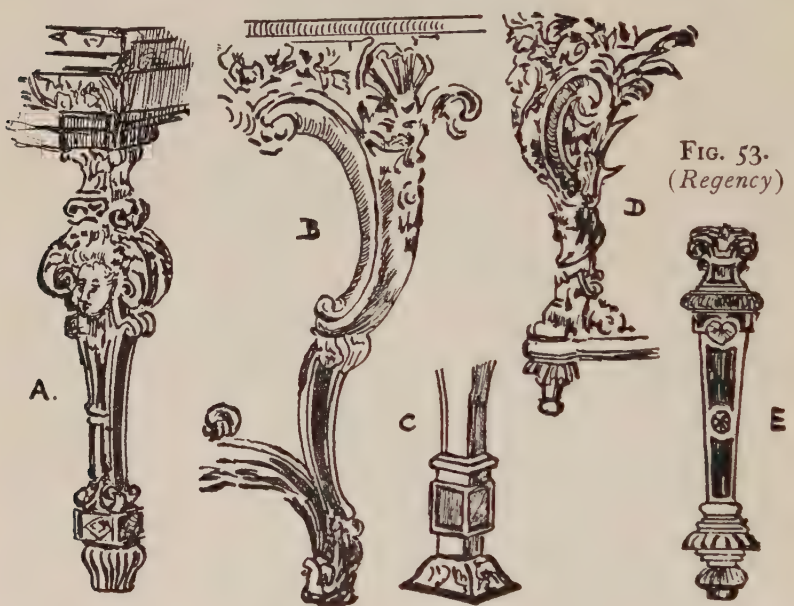


Fig. 53. (*Regency*)

Fig. 51. Fig. 52. Fig. 50.

and a diagonal stretcher in the form of a perfectly straight-lined "X." Then began to assert itself a feeling that a roundness here and there would relieve the severity without detracting from the dignity of the chair. So the pedestal leg, still square in the tapering section, was capped with a decorative in-

verted cup of acanthus or lotus leaves (Fig. 51), while the corners of the back were scrolled, thus breaking the straight top line. The stretcher of this date also began to curve, in the first of those reverse curves in different planes which are such a blot on the artistic shield of the early part of the *Grand Monarque*'s reign. This type, however, died out almost as soon as it was born, probably because it made its first appearance on a royal chair—there is a specimen in the Metropolitan Museum—and so immediately came in for the criticism of a highly-cultured and finely-perceptioned group of courtiers.

Then the upholstered back began to lose its stiffness also, and the top line broke into a gentle serpentine arch, but this only happened some years after the pedestal leg had lost favor and been replaced by others, composed of a couple of reversed curves—a flat "S"—(Fig. 52) which in their turn, at the beginning of the 18th century, became the cabriole leg. The origin of the cabriole leg was, of course, Flemish, derived from the "S" scroll turned on its end. At first it was turned straight to the front as we see it in early Charles II chairs. Then it was placed cornerwise and the Dutch cabriole leg commenced its fifty-year reign. Fig. 53 is still later, *c.* 1720. *(Regency style.)*

At the same time the arms, which at first had run out from the back in perfectly parallel lines, began to become serpentine and splay outwards, only at the ends at first, then along a considerable portion of their length, at least four to six inches.

In the first nineteen years of the 18th century, of which the last four belong properly to the Regency period, the furniture of the Louis XIV style approached so closely to the rococo mode of the Regency period and the reign of Louis XV, the Well-Beloved, that many expert connoisseurs are deceived as to their date, and museum attributions are, in only too many cases, erroneous.

But one point alone will definitely place a chair and even a table or console—though in the last two instances the rule is less rigid—as Louis XIV or Louis XV. We have seen how the pedestal-legged chair, *without a stretcher*, is Louis XIII. It is so classed by French experts—there is a well-known piece at the presidential *Palais de l'Elysée*—yet Strange, in his "French Interiors, etc.," calls it Louis XIV, probably because of its legs. It may be that "Italian" is nearer the mark.

Now it can be laid down as definite rules:

(I) That a Louis XIII *French manner* chair has either no stretcher at all—very rarely—or an "H"

PLATE LIII, a.—EARLY CHEST-OF-DRAWERS ON LEGS (HIGHBOY) IN THE WILLIAM-AND-MARY MANNER. C. 1700. (See page 309)

PLATE LIII, b.—IMPROVED FORM OF NEW ENGLAND HIGHBOY, WITH PSEUDO-INVERTED-CUP LEGS AND A RUN-AROUND STRETCHER. C. 1710. (See page 310)

PLATE LIV, a.—RUSH-SEATED BANISTER-BACK CHAIR, WITH TURNED SPINDLES CUT IN HALF WITH THE FLAT SIDE TO THE FRONT. (See page 310)

PLATE LIV, b.—A "MEMORY"-PIECE IN THE TRANSITION JAMES II MANNER, PENNSYLVANIA. (See page 310)

stretcher, that is to say, a bar on each side connecting the front and back legs, with another joining these two side bars. It also has, generally, a front stretcher between the front legs. (Plate XVI, a.)

(II) That a Louis XIV chair always has a stretcher, and that that stretcher is *invariably* placed saltirewise, that is to say, diagonally, joining a right front leg to a left back leg and vice-versa. (Plate XVII, b.)

(III) That Regency (1715-1723) chairs, in the first half of the period, approximately speaking, follow the Louis XIV stretcher rule, while in the second half they approach the Louis XV no-stretcher principle.

(IV) That a pure Louis XV chair, having shorter legs, requires no stretcher at all, and, therefore, has none.

These four laws are practically constant, the exceptions thereto being, when thoroughly examined, found to be later reproductions, or frankly fraudulent copies, of pieces of the Regency or Louis XV modes, or perhaps belated country pieces. The dates will always be found to be corroborated by other details such as the ubiquitous concave cockle-shell of Louis XIV, or the thinly-strewn carved flowers and foliage and often the trellis-work and reed patterns

of the Regency. Naturally, only wide experience can provide the instinctive feeling for the true style of a piece of furniture, and this fact is the cause of three-quarters of the false attributions which do so much harm to the cause of connoisseurship, not only in America, but elsewhere, for the critic, only too frequently, bases his attribution too much on certain minor points, such as a curvilinear leg, and not enough on general feeling.

Fig. 54.—The Typical "Coquille" or Shell Motive of the Louis XIV Style.

The shell, previously mentioned (Fig. 54), is the decorative motive *par excellence* of the Louis XIV period. It is found everywhere: on the apron (or valance) of a chair; at corners above the leg; on the arm ends; in the cresting; on architectural cornerstones; in tapestry borders; in short, a pure Louis XIV work is seldom without it, somewhere. It was a development of the shell-like crown that pagan grotesques wore in Renaissance carving, through

that loss of comprehension of the original meaning of which we spoke in a previous chapter. In England, the shell was also used, especially on "Decorated Queen Anne" furniture. Chippendale used it in the French manner as did his disciple, that brilliant American cabinet-maker, William Savery, of Philadelphia, by whom there are a number of characteristic highboys, lowboys and a table in the Metropolitan Museum. John Goddard, of Newport, Rhode Island, perhaps the most perfect craftsman—in furniture—America has produced, preferred the Queen Anne convex shell, with an "*intaglio*" of the same sort between the two outside ones. (See Frontispiece.)

Louis XIV furniture is extremely ornate, but its decoration—aside from the work of the celebrated Swiss craftsman Boulle * and his school—consists of carving of the wood itself into scrolls, volutes, floral garlands and the shell (Plate XXII a and b). Volutes are as much a feature of the Louis XIV as of the Louis XV style, but those of the former reign are single curves, curled in at the ends, whereas the latter are double parallel curves joined together with bars modeled so as to form "O"-shaped

* *Andre Charles Boulle (1642-1732) developed an eccentric style of his own which was popular among the nobles of his day. Its characteristics are the use of ebony inlaid with steel, brass, tortoise-shell, etc., the two former in brilliant close scroll-patterns. It is clever craftsmanship though rarely great art.*

holes between each pair. The French call these connecting bars *bretelles*, or braces. The word "rococo," which began to come into general use around the year 1718, is a corruption of the two words, *rocaille*

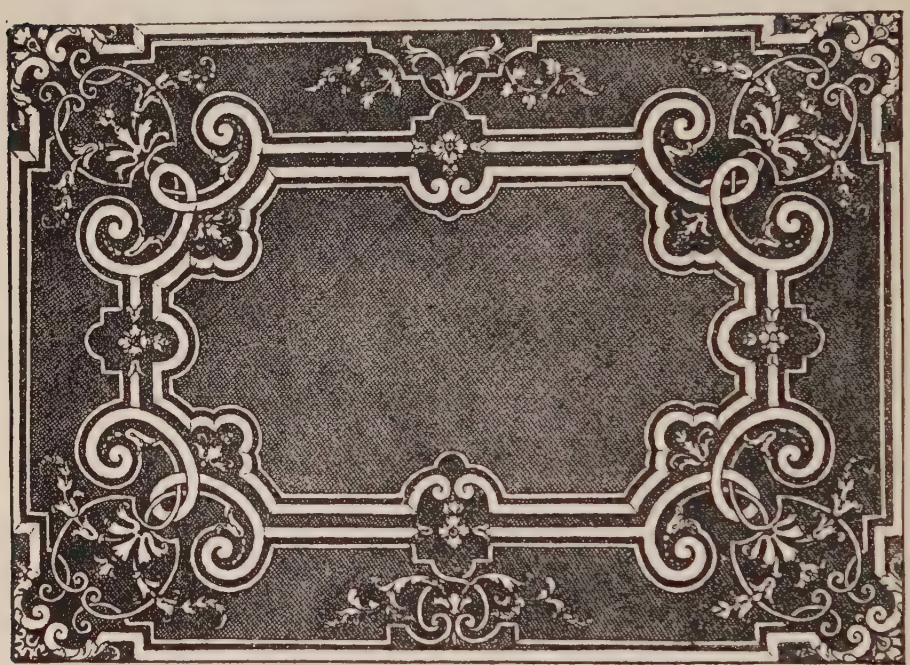


Fig. 55.—A Daniel Marot Design Showing the Typical Louis XIV Conjunction of Straight Lines and Curves.

and *coquille* (rockery and shell) expressing the principal decorative motive of the Regency and the reign of Louis XV. But the shell, here, is not the Louis XIV cockle-shell, as some writers aver. It is the volute, which is a sectional view of that mollusc.

PLATE LV, a.—CURIOUS WAINSCOT CHAIR OF NORWEGIAN DESIGN AND STYLE. (See page 311)

PLATE LV, b. — AMERICAN WAINSCOT CHAIR IN THE ELIZABETHAN-JACOBEAN STYLE. c. 1685. (See page 311)

Plate LVI, a.—Pennsylvania Queen Anne Chair. Note Splat Descending to Bar Only, Bulb-turned Spindle Stretcher and Spanish-Flemish Foot. c. 1725. (See page 312)

Plate LVI, b.—Curious Chippendale-back New York Chair, with the Dutch Horizontal Bar and Spanish Foot. c. 1785. (See page 312)

A characteristic feature of Louis XIV contours, which is found not only in woodwork, but also in tapestry, brocade and damask patterns is a straight line followed by a curve. (Fig. 55.)

The period style of Louis XIV was destined to play a most important rôle in the evolution of English 18th century styles, although on account of the hiatus of twenty-five years, during which English furniture design was of almost purely Dutch origin the influence of the *Grand Monarque*—except as regards the "Daniel Marot" type—is almost unrecognized and the credit for influence upon the Early Georgian mode given to Louis XV. Even in France, the "Eighteenth Century" as an art term is generally taken to refer to the *Roi Bien-Aimé*, Louis XV. But whereas the pedestal leg of Daniel Marot, rounded to suit the English taste, was a direct child of that Louis XIV feature, it was an early one, while the ornate period of that monarch's reign was repeated in England, in the so-called "Decorated Queen Anne" and "Lion" subdivisions of the early Georgian style, and indeed right through into the best Chippendale work though it came to us not direct from France but through Herrenhausen in Hanover. This subject will be treated in a subsequent chapter.

CHAPTER XI

THE WILLIAM-AND-MARY AND QUEEN ANNE STYLES

ALTHOUGH it has been the custom to class the furniture designed during the reigns of the Dutchman, William of Orange, and his Stuart Queen, Mary, and of their successors, Queen Anne and George I, under the one heading of Anglo-Dutch, this classification is inaccurate, at least partially, in so far as the very early part of the William-and-Mary period is concerned, which would be more correctly labeled Anglo-French for it was introduced into England by a Frenchman who was residing temporarily in Holland at about the time that William of Orange was contemplating the possibility of his succession to the throne of James II. As we have seen, one of the leading cabinet-makers of the luxurious court of Louis XIV was Daniel Marot. But he was a Huguenot, and under the terms of the Edict of Nantes, promulgated in 1598 by Henri IV, had lived and worked in peace and comfort under Louis XIV, and had even become a favorite craftsman of the Catholic sovereign. But in 1685, through

the occult influence of Madame de Maintenon, the Edict of Nantes was revoked, and not only was the exercise of any but the Catholic religion prohibited, but it was even forbidden to the Huguenots to leave France, thereby obliging them either to become converted or be severely punished. Nevertheless, despite the anti-emigration order, no less than 50,000 families escaped into foreign countries, many of them into Holland. Thus, Daniel Marot, the father of the "pedestal leg" in Northern Europe, came under the notice of William of Orange who, when he was called to the throne of Great Britain, took the Frenchman over with him in his train.

So it came about that the most characteristic feature of the William-and-Mary style is not of Dutch origin, but an evolution of a typical early Louis XIV feature, introduced by that monarch's banished craftsman, for the so-called "inverted-cup" leg is simply an adaptation of the square pedestal leg, offering one more example of the English fancy for turned curves as opposed to the French affection for the more classical rectilinear contours. This is noticeable even in Early English (13th century) Gothic structures, where the Englishmen made use of the circular abacus above the pier-capitals, while the French monastic "architects" retained the square

block of the romanesque type. The connection of the English inverted cup and the French pedestal legs can be seen clearly from a comparison between the small William-and-Mary (Daniel Marot) dressing-table, and the legs of the typical English highboy of the period (Plate XXIII, a and b). The inverted-cup leg is the distinguishing feature *par excellence* of the William-and-Mary style, not in the sense that any furniture not possessing this feature must belong to another period, but because anything with it can be only William-and-Mary. Another detail of this style which, however, flows over into the Queen Anne, is the semi-circular "hood" or "double-hood" used chiefly for the pediment of *secrétaires* and cabinets, and the "cresting" of chair-backs. It is also found in the design of chair-stretchers, in the aprons of tables and lowboys, and in marquetry designs. It is as distinctive of the Anglo-Dutch style as the leg previously described, and appears everywhere, even in subsidiary motives, as in the lacquered writing-cabinet and in the hall-clock. (Plate XXIV a and b.) In the latter it appears as a contour ornament of each packet of floral decoration. When it appears in conjunction with the inverted-cup leg, it is William-and-Mary. When, however, it goes with the block foot, it is Queen Anne.

The manner in which the stretcher of William-and-Mary tables and highboys is attached is again characteristic. Instead of the separate side and front stretchers that had been the mode up to the last decade of the 17th century,* one continuous stretcher came into vogue, lying flat and with its contour fashioned into one of several prevailing patterns. In the commoner furniture we find a segmental arc contour connecting the front legs, running round the sides and becoming a plain unornamented plank at the back, while in "finer" pieces, there is a flat bracket, or ogee, arch used in the same way. Sometimes the Flemish "I" (Fig. 16) was used instead of the "run-around" stretcher, but then the piece is either Dutch —the workmanship of the carcase will show that— or was made in England under a Dutch foreman.

In regard to chairs of the style, they are quite easily recognizable by the lines of the back, for below the cresting they almost always have either one or more independent spindles flanking the caned, or carved, or carved and pierced, back-panel, along its entire length. (Fig. 56.) There are exceptions, of course, to the most rigid of rules. But the earlier William-and-Mary chairs offer many pitfalls for the tyro in styles, for the transition from the Restoration

* *Except in Henri Deux French chairs (see Fig. 26).*

styles of Charles II and James II to that of their successor was a very gradual one, owing to the strong French influence exercised over furniture design in the reign of the "Merrie Monarch" by Louise de la Quérouaille, later Duchess of Portsmouth, repeated in the reign of the quiet Dutch *Stadhouder* as we have already explained by the more respectable influence of Daniel Marot. So it comes about that we find some of the cleverest experts calling such chairs as the one reproduced here, in pen and ink, William-and-Mary, which, though it be technically correct, is, nevertheless, misleading. Technically correct in that they possess such distinctive features as the spindle uprights and splayed arms of the new style. But at the same time they bear characteristics of the late Restora-

FIG. 56.—TRANSITIONAL RESTORATION—WILLIAM-AND-MARY CHAIR.

tion such as the richly-carved front stretcher with its typical basket of fruits and flowers repeated in the cresting which is one of the most important of Stuart marks. One point will be of help in determining the date of a transition chair such as this one, for it is constant: that is the size of the mesh of the caning, when it is the original work. In the chairs of Charles I, the cane itself is very coarse in quality, and plaited into a big mesh; in that of Charles II and of James II the mesh becomes somewhat smaller, though the coarse material is still used, while in the time of William III the cane itself was very much finer in quality, color, and texture. The mesh was much tighter. The backs of the fine chairs of the best quality were, however, not caned, but very richly, and in many cases, very beautifully carved.

Some of these richly-carved walnut chairs (see Plate XXV, a and b) have no spindle uprights, and are Franco-Dutch in design. They have the Louis XIV shell, the trellis of the early days of the 18th century, the half-circle ornament, the late 17th century figure busts, and in this type of chair the late Louis XIV quasi-cabriole leg, either with the "*pied de biche*" (doe's foot) or a donkey's hoof termination, *without a stretcher*. Sometimes almost all these features were combined in one piece, *e.g.*,

two chairs in the Metropolitan Museum; at other times, in less richly-carved pieces only the simpler ornaments were employed. Occasionally, also, in still less valuable pieces the embryo fiddle-back contour will be found as a back piece, *without spindles* but with "cyma"-curved uprights.

It was during the reign of the Usurper, as the Stuart adherents persisted in calling William of Orange, that that popular piece of furniture, the highboy, made its appearance. Here again, the foreign influence, principally French, made itself felt, this time in the very name of the piece. It is derived from the French words *haut* (high) and *bois* (wood). The word *bois* has been employed for centuries in the sense of "furniture" (*mettre dans ses bois* means, today, install someone in a house with his or her own furniture) and so with the English word "high" restored to use, the name "highboy" came into existence. The name, like that of the smaller piece, the lowboy, was first used in America, rarely in England, where the highboy is usually called a "chest on legs."

William-and-Mary highboys differ from those of the Queen Anne style by being smaller and lower with a horizontal top line whereas those of the later reign invariably had either a broken pediment or a swan-neck or a broken-arch pediment. The

William-and-Mary pieces are simply a number of moulded drawers on a typical stand of the style, generally having four legs in front and two at the back, all joined by the one flat stretcher in one of the patterns already described. In English pieces, as distinct from American (see Chapter XVIII) the *mouldings on each layer of drawers are of a different design* (see Plate XXIII, b), though when there are drawers on the top of the stand section, these are sometimes of the same pattern as one of the upper layers, generally the simplest. Characteristic specimens always have straight legs. Drop-handles, in the husk pattern (which is a conventionalization of the *garrya elliptica* flower) or pear-shaped, on a plain or foliated circular base are typical of this first part of the Anglo-Dutch period, because no other type would fit into the Flemish mouldings.

In the matter of decoration, marquetry took the place of the old-fashioned inlay and some handsome effects were obtained through the remarkable skill of some of the Dutch workers in cutting and fitting the finest scroll patterns in so fragile a material. It is a very common error to label marquetry as inlay, and *vice versa*, whereas there is a fundamental difference between them. "Inlay" refers to the setting of some foreign substance into holes cut to receive it

in the solid body of the piece to be so decorated. We saw in a previous chapter how the artists in inlay in Italy, France and in England, during the Elizabethan and early Jacobean reigns, used everything from ivory and mother-of-pearl and tortoise shell and metals, in the continental countries, to bog-oak and holly in England. But "marquetry" is simply inlay of thin veneer materials into the main *veneer* of the piece of furniture. In English work, it is always of wood, never of metals or stones or other inlay favorites. And it follows from what we have just set down that the inlay material was only of the same thickness as the veneer into which it was fitted. Nor in purely English pieces is the wood ever tinted by acids or otherwise colored.

Veneering itself was a new art, so far as England was concerned, although it is as old as the first buildings and is stated to have been employed in the Temple of Solomon, though that idea may have sprung from the phrase, "And he covered the walls on the inside with wood, and covered the floor of the house with planks of fir." It consisted of covering the surface of a comparatively common wood with a thin skin of some other, of semi-precious quality, in order that while cutting the body of the piece with the grain to give it the necessary strength, the visible surface

could be given over to the beauty of the grains of the veneer woods, cut most frequently across them, as in the case of burr-walnut and the beautiful oyster walnut, and of bird's-eye maple and others, the latter in the American colonies. In those days, when the veneer had to be cut by hand, it was made from a sixteenth to an eighth of an inch thick, whereas now that it is prepared by machinery it is rarely more than a thirty-second of an inch thick and frequently less than a sixtieth. This is a precious indication for the detection of fake pieces. It is also one of the reasons why modern veneer holds better than the old hand-cut material, for glue will hold a thin sheet of anything better than a thick one. Fine effects of veneering were obtained, particularly in France, and late in the 18th century in America, by juxtaposing different colored woods or arranging the grains so that they made patterns, usually of a rectilinear order. This is called "parquetting," and was very popular in France at the end of the 18th century in the last years of the reign of Louis XV and throughout that of his successor.

Marquetry came to England from Holland, but before the elevation of the Prince of Orange to the throne of his wife's family. It was introduced somewhere between 1675 and 1680, and is again an excel-

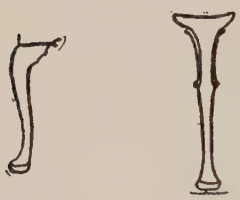
lent indicator of the date of a piece of marquetry furniture, for the designs employed were each characteristic of certain periods. The word "marquetry" is an anglicisation of *marqueterie*, derived from the French word *marqueter* (pronounced mark-tay), to variegate, which to the flower-loving Dutchmen of the 17th century took a floral form. The earliest Dutch designs were naturalistic flower patterns, tulips and carnations, in loosely-constructed bunches. On reaching England, however, at a time when even the growing of flowers and the laying out of gardens was accomplished in a formal manner, the naturalistic floral designs of the Dutch were mingled with conventional scrolls at the bases of the bunches, giving a more or less bi-symmetrical effect to the marquetry panel. (Plate XXVI.) Then a brilliant scroll-work of conventionalized foliage came to be employed and soon became so fine in pattern and workmanship that it was known as "seaweed marquetry." (Plate XXVII, a and b.) Finally, towards the end of Queen Anne's reign, the sea-weed motives degenerated into complicated arabesques, and marquetry, following the examples of all other arts that die out under the influence of too great a facility of technique, gave place to a new "fad," that of lacquered furniture either properly so, or japanned, which was nothing

more than an attempt to produce the *effect* of Japanese lacquer with a varnish that had no connection with the true lacquer-varnish tree (*Rhus vernicifera*).

Most of the so-called lacquer-work of the late William-and-Mary and the Queen Anne periods is simply japanning, as will be seen from its surface, which is coarse and thin-looking, whereas Japanese lacquer is thick, highly polished, of very fine texture, and unctuously smooth of surface. The Japanese lacquer artists worked on a ground, prepared for them, of from 40 to 50 coats of lacquer sap, whereas English "lacquer" is only laid in one or two coats. The French "*vernis Martin*" so much used in the Louis XV and early Louis XVI styles, was infinitely better "lacquer" than the so-called "japanning" in England.

In 1702, William III died and Queen Anne ascended the throne of England, and ruled until 1714. Anne was the daughter of James II, by his first wife, Anne Hyde, and inherited all her mother's simplicity of life and thought. Now the lackadaisical, easy-going character of this daughter of a bigoted monarch was reflected in the household furnishings of the period, which were as colorless as the queen herself.

Anne was a woman of very simple tastes and the mother of nineteen children, all of whom died young. She married a prince of a country with no outstanding artistic status, George of Denmark, and thus it came about that the plainest Dutch type of furniture, generally without any ornamentation at all, or, at the most, a convex cockleshell on the knees of the perfectly-plain, club-footed cabriole legs (Figs. 57 and 58), and with a splat-back as simple as the remainder of the frame, flanked by a hooded cyma curve on each side (Fig. 59), became the style at court, whence, as always, it spread among the courtiers and nobles. Once again, as in the Cromwellian era, simplicity became the mode, though this time it was a slavish aping of a despised court circle's habit, instead of the sincere austerity which inspired it in the days of the Roundheads.



FIGS. 57 AND 58.—TWO PURE QUEEN ANNE STYLE CHAIR LEGS.

In addition to the features mentioned above, Queen Anne chairs, proper, *i.e.*, made between 1702 and 1714, should have rounded—not square—uprights to the back, and, in the case of arm-chairs, the arms also should be round. A fine moulding lining the inside curve of the knee is allowable in a

true Queen Anne style chair, but with this exception and the shell on the knee, the piece must be absolutely plain. In a number of early Queen Anne pieces, a simply turned H-stretcher still remains, a relic of the pure Dutch type. Many dealers call chairs "Queen Anne" which show a certain amount of ornamentation, such as lacquered backs and legs, the latter terminating in a doe's foot (*pied-de-biche*), but such pieces are not in the style of Queen Anne proper. They belong to that period of Early Georgian styles, known as the "Decorated Queen Anne," which did not come into being until 1714, the year of the queen's death, and were a form of *German* "rococo" direct from Herrenhausen in Hanover. Queen Anne splat-backs are *never* pierced, whereas the "Decorated Queen Anne" backs are very rarely unpierced and have frequently a small oval surrounded by a sort of setting as though a carbuncle

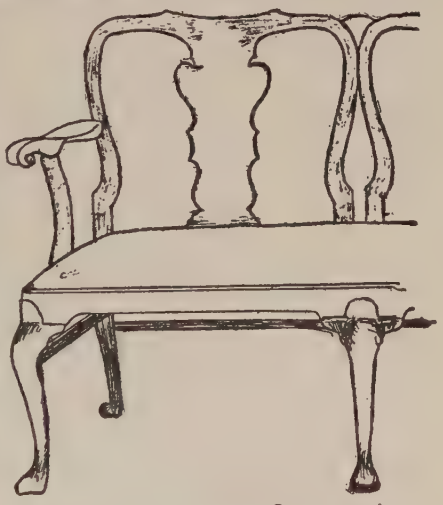
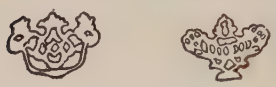


FIG. 59.—IN THIS QUEEN ANNE SETTEE THE EAGLE HEAD IS DEPICTED IN THE "CUTOUT" OF THE BACK.

had been placed in it and then removed. Nor is the ball-and-claw foot a characteristic detail of the Queen Anne style, as is so commonly believed. It is *never* found in true Queen Anne pieces, but belonged to the early "Decorated Queen Anne" style, coming in about 1715.



FIGS. 60 AND 61.—PURE QUEEN ANNE STYLE HANDLE-PLATES FREQUENTLY USED IN AMERICAN PIECES.

The Queen Anne foot in English and Dutch-type pieces is always the almost circular "club-foot," which we shall find again in New England American furniture, where it soon degenerates into a pointed or slipper-foot or a debasement of the Spanish or Flemish foot, the latter in New York and Pennsylvania pieces.

The drop handles of the William-and-Mary style gave way to bale handles on a wide plate in the form of a conventional spread-eagle, derived from the coat-of-arms of the Italian princely house of Este, to which belonged the first wife of James II. (Figs. 60 and 61.) We sometimes, though rarely, find this conventional eagle on William-and-Mary pieces, but they properly belong to the reign of the last of the Stuarts. In the following style, the Decorated Queen Anne, the first of the early Georgian styles, we find the conventional spread-eagle gradually dying out, though it did survive as a handle-, or key-plate. The

PLATE LVIII.—PENNSYLVANIA "KAS" OR CUPBOARD WITH DOORS PAINTED IN *Grisaille*. (LATE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY PERIOD). NOTE LOUIS XVI STYLE RIBBON-BOW. (See page 315)

PLATE LVII, a.—AMERICAN COURT CUPBOARD IN THE ELIZABETHAN MANNER, BUT WITH THE LATER TURNING AND SPLIT-SPINDLES. c. 1685-90. (See page 315)

PLATE LVII, b.—CURIOUS COMBINATION OF THE COURT-CUPBOARD UPPER SECTION WITH THE MOULDED DRAWERS AND EBONIZING OF THE WILLIAM-AND-MARY STYLE. c. 1800. (See page 315)

bird itself, in its natural form, was frequently employed as a motive, with its head used in numerous ways. A fine mirror-back chair at the Metropolitan Museum, belonging truly to the Satyr-mask (3d) period of Early Georgian, has a couple of eagle-heads with the talons also, to form the hood of the cresting, as well as one at the extremity of each arm.

As stated already, the highboy was a favorite form of chest in this period, but it was no longer a rectilinear affair on straight stretchered legs. It was lightened in appearance, given a graceful curved pediment in various shapes, and placed upon four slender cabriole legs without any stretcher at all. (Fig. 62.) Wing-chairs, introduced from Holland as early as James II, became very popular in Queen Anne's reign, but they stood lower in the back than the earlier ones, on short stumpy cabriole legs without a stretcher, and were provided with a loose cushion in order to make the seat comfortably high.

Fig. 62.

Needlework in wool, *gros-point* and *petit-point*, was extensively used for upholstery purposes and the

genuine old needlework of this period is much sought after today.

A rather stumpy arm-chair with a high back and the seat wide enough for two people was popular at this time. It was called a love-seat. (Fig. 63.)

The tables of the Queen-Anne style are generally of the drop-leaf type, with a swinging leg (not a

Fig. 63.

Fig. 64.

gate-leg, for there is no stretcher), all the legs being very slender and simple, but cut in fine lines, lending themselves to a beautiful *patina* such as is difficult to obtain with any other style of English furniture. They are sometimes known as "Spider-leg tables." An example of this graceful object is illustrated here. (Fig. 64.)

CHAPTER XII

THE REGENCY AND LOUIS XV

THAT great period known as the Renaissance, the re-birth of the arts and letters, which, born in Italy, spread, like a blaze of sunlight on a dark valley, over the whole of Europe, reached its peak in the eighteenth century, after having slowed up for nearly one hundred years, tired by the terrific pace at which it had led the world for more than three centuries. Once again we saw, this time mainly in France, but also in England and Italy, the marvelous phenomenon of a whole people drunk with the desire for culture and artistic knowledge. And it was a genuine love, this 18th century feeling; it was no affectation nor desire to emulate the example of others. Once again, particularly this time in France, art ruled *en maîtresse* and it was the king's most renowned favorite, Madame de Pompadour, who ruled the arts, and lent her own wide culture and innate taste to their cultivation.

In the matter of furniture and what we call today "interior decoration," there was, however, a

change of sentiment. Renaissance furniture itself was mainly architectural in design and even construction while the rooms also were decorated with architectural motives and ornaments borrowed from the antique, either almost purely classic, as in the case of Florentine work, or adapted, as in that of Venice and of France. Pictures were rarely used for decorative purposes on walls. *Cassone* (marriage chests) were embellished, of course, by the brush, frequently, of the greatest masters of the *Quattrocento* and the *Cinquecento*, but though biblical and other religious subjects were the usual form taken by these *cassone* paintings—for marriage is one of the chief sacraments of the Catholic Church—many of them were ornamented with secular subjects, such as the chase, the tourney, and such appropriate themes as the courts of love at which the "troubadours" of the day vied with each other in devising rhymed romances. Occasionally, in commemoration of some important event, a painting referring to it would be used as part of the decorative scheme of the palace or villa of some great noble or wealthy merchant. A noteworthy example is that of the two famous Botticelli frescoes in the Louvre, which were painted to the order of Giovanni dei Tornabuoni, the uncle of Lorenzo dei Medici, *il Magnifico*, to celebrate the mar-

PLATE LIX.—BEAUTIFULLY-VENEERED DROP-LEAF DESK-COMMODE IN THE ANGLO-DUTCH MANNER. C. 1725-30. (See page 317)

PLATE LX, a.—EARLY AMERICAN TRESTLE TABLE WITH VERY NARROW TOP, AND AN INGENIOUS STRETCHER. (See page 318)

PLATE LX, b.—SQUARE-TOPPED "BUTTERFLY" TABLE. NOTE THE WARPING OF THE THREE TOP-BOARDS. (See page 318)

riage of his son Lorenzo to Giovanna degli Albizzi, the daughter of another great Florentine. But these again are but the necessary exceptions to the general rule.

Now in the 18th century, by which generic term the French *amateurs d'art* mean the reign of Louis XV, including the Regency, all the arts, including the graphic and plastic, were impressed into the service of those who made a great Art out of what had been for a century almost a national profession. Painters, metal-workers, sculptors, masters of marquetry and of the manufacture and decoration of porcelain, weavers, and so forth, all joined the cabinet-makers proper in creating such a wealth of artistic beauty, for its own sake, as has left France with an almost inextinguishable reputation as the world's leader in art up to the present day. Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, Lancret and Pater, J. B. Huet, Hubert Robert, the Van Loo family and the earlier Vernets painted wall-panels, over-mantels, *dessus de porte*, screens, or designed tapestries for Beauvais and Aubusson chair and settee backs; Cressent, Oppenordt, Robert de Cotte, Meissonnier, Gouthière and the most famous of them all, Jacques Caffieri, designed and executed those remarkable ormolu mountings which are so characteristic a feature of Louis

XV furniture; Oeben and Riesener, masters of inlay and marquetry, divided the honors with such famous cabinet-makers as Garnier, de Cuvilles, Latz, Hedouin, Filleul, Dautriche and Pineau in the designing of cabinets and corner-cupboards with parquetted panels, enriched with exquisite marquetry of colored and scorched precious woods. Throughout the reign, Chinese porcelains were mounted magnificently in ormolu by the greatest masters, while at the end of the reign Sèvres plaques were sometimes inserted into furniture as an integral part of its decoration as Wedgwood's Etruria ware was used in England by the Adam Brothers.

Madame de Pompadour led in that intense love of Chinese porcelain, the queen of all the applied arts, which procured for her country many of the finest pieces in existence, and also induced the king to purchase a third share in the Sèvres factory, thus contributing greatly both to the excellence of the wares produced and to their reputation at home and abroad. What is known as the Pompadour period in Sèvres porcelain dates from 1753 to 1763. In 1760 the Manufactory of Sèvres became a royal appurtenance, with "the exclusive privilege of making every description of porcelain. . . . "

As we pointed out in a previous chapter the main

motive behind the royal munificence of Louis XIV as regards art patronage was the desire for the enhancement of his intellectual glory, just as along other lines he craved military fame, emulating Caesar to such an extent that almost all the equestrian statues of *Louis le Grand* depict that monarch in the armor of ancient Rome, and one of the chief architectural ornaments of the style is the body-shaped cuirass and the grieves of the Roman legionaries. But with the Louis XV epoch an altogether different note was sounded. Louis the "Well-Beloved" was only five years old when, in 1715, his great-grandfather died and left the succession in his tender hands, to be steered, until the boy's majority, by his uncle, the Duke of Orleans. Perhaps it was because he sensed the ephemeral quality of his tenure of office, as regent, that the dissolute Philip contrived to destroy so much of the great fabric of statecraft, so laboriously built up by the *Roi-Soleil*. Instigated to all manner of debauchery and excesses by his favorite, Cardinal Dubois, Philip of Orleans set out to promote gaiety in court circles, whereas in the last years of Louis XIVth's reign there had been nothing but dignity and respectability. Art became the means to an end, the end always being pleasure. There was no longer any thought of the greatness of

France, and that devil-may-care spirit which pervaded the court under the Regency was reflected clearly in the creation of art forms, as evanescent as itself, the emanation of brains drugged with sensuality, careless of precedent, and totally oblivious to their effect upon the fair name of France. The great nation of Louis XIV, inspired by Alexander the Great and Julius Cæsar, had become the plaything of a modern Heliogabalus and the laughing stock of the civilised world. The Regency was, then, only a transition style, to the extent that it exaggerated that love of curvilinear contours which is typical of the first half of the 18th century as a whole. Its exaggerations, for they were not developments, were frothy and artistically meaningless; floral motives were scattered everywhere as though France had no higher ideals than flower-strewn walks. Nymphs and satyrs; troops of bacchantes with the gross Silenus on an ass; gallant rendezvous—the "Embarkation for Cytherea"—were the favorite subjects of artists both for easel pictures and for decorative purposes. And, as always, when an art form is "builded upon sand," when it is devoid of meaning, French *ébénisterie* broke out into such a flurry of bad taste as has rarely been seen in the art history of the world. Such appalling examples as the console table illustrated

here (Fig. 65) were reproduced in a thousand equally bad or worse cases. The term *rococo*, which originally was nothing more than a combination of the names of the two most distinctive motives of the Louis XIV style, *rocaille* and *coquille* ("rockery"

FIG. 65.—LOUIS XV CONSOLE-TABLE.

Note the total lack of symmetry (asymmetry) displayed in the centre of the upper valance and the stretcher, which demonstrates that it is not in the Regency style.

and "shell"), fell at length into such contempt that it is used even today to express anything showily meretricious and in bad taste.

Nevertheless, despite the devastating influence of the Regent and his court,—the famous group of the *Parc-aux-Cerfs*,—and the influx of innumerable foreign craftsmen, the firm hold of the previous style

with its solid classical foundation and its conscientious workmanship, both in design and execution, anchored to some extent, at least, the innate better taste of the French nobility and gentry. They have never given way for long before a rush towards the bizarre, and so we find in furniture designed for the staider, usually the greater, houses, much of the restraint of the late Louis XIV style, but with the visible effects of the normal evolution into another style where comfortable showiness was to replace dignified splendor. It is this type of Regency furniture which has the greatest interest for us, for it is the usual type found in America either in genuine examples or good reproductions. The more bizarre pieces were made for the royal palaces where they are still to be seen, pitiful witnesses to the blind following of fashion, for their formerly admired beauty is invisible to our eyes, and we see only the wasted form of an ancient favorite, a Rodin's "*Belle Heaumière*" in furniture. The Metropolitan Museum of Art has many Regency pieces of the better type, and it is interesting to note how, in the early part of the Regency, say from 1715 to about 1719, the chief characteristics are those of the Louis XIV style, while later these disappear and the pure Louis XV motives and contours take control. We find first

and foremost the stretcher still in the X-form, but in the shape of two double swan-necks, with a rosette or similar ornament at the centre. And the early Regency side-chairs are quite distinctive, for they are small, high and narrow, often with a caned seat and back, and with this stretcher, which always appears too low and too large, in fact hardly necessary in so exiguous an article of furniture. The back panel, usually well separated from the seat, is small and square in shape, though its cresting is either serpentine or in some other decorative form with the shell in the centre. Loose flowers carved in high relief are strewn about the woodwork and the centre ornament both of the cresting and the apron is almost invariably a bunch of flowers, though, in richer pieces, we see a conventional voluted cartouche, always bi-symmetrical in Regency pieces. A sort of heavy reed, sprouting upward-pointing spikes, is a feature of Regency design and we find the typical Louis XIV shell everywhere in those first years of the minority of Louis *le Bien-Aimé*. Sometimes, though rarely, it is used as the centre ornament of the apron and cresting, and when it is, the chair belongs to the years closer to the end of the previous reign.

From the beginning of the third decade of the 18th century, the Louis XV style proper began to

develop. The chairs remained, for a year or two high on their legs, and floral ornaments still abounded, but the stretcher disappears and the shell changes from its naturalistic into a more conventional form, more like the shell crowns of Renaissance *mascarons* and grotesques than those of the Louis XIV style. Again the volute motive, which we saw as a single curve derived from the sectional view of the shell, began its progress toward the double-braced volute which characterises the Louis XV type. It was this period which saw the most outrageous exaggerations of the rococo style in the hands of such men as Jules Aurèle Meissonnier, in spite of his name, an Italian from Turin, to whom bi-lateral symmetry was anathema, but who frequently displayed much ingenuity in producing *balance of mass*, of excellent composition, in completely *asymmetrical contour*. That point is an important one, for it may be laid down as a rule for guidance in the distinction between styles that the Louis XIV *style* and that of the Regency are bi-symmetrical whereas in the actual style of Louis XV the lack of bi-symmetrical ornament is noticeable everywhere. (Plate XXVIII, a.) For the floral or modified shell motive in chair-crestings and aprons, a very typical asymmetrical ornament was substituted and that motive illustrated in cartouche form

PLATE LXI.—LATE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY GATE-LEG TABLE WITH NEW YORK MANNER TURNING. NOTE AGAIN THE WARPED TOP-BOARDS. (See page 318)

PLATE LXII, a.—THE SO-CALLED "CARVER" CHAIR, WITH TURNED SPINDLES AND RUSH-SEAT. (See page 324)

PLATE LXII, b.—THE "OLIVER GOLDSMITH" WINDSOR CHAIR, NOW IN THE VICTORIA-AND-ALBERT MUSEUM. (See page 322)

here is to be found as commonly as the shell in the previous mode. Chair legs became quite short and stocky and the very much broader seats were filled with heavy cushions, such as were also used in England in the reign of Queen Anne. Where tapestries of either Beauvais or Aubusson were not used for the upholstery of chairs and settees a rich red satin damask was habitually employed while the woodwork of the seats was often gilded. (Fig. 66.)

FIG. 66.—LOUIS XV TAPESTRY CHAIR.

Note complete absence of straight lines.

The typical leg of the very late Louis XIV, Regency, and Louis XV styles was a flat "S" with a scrolled foot.

In the richer tables, commodes, desks and such articles the carving of the wood itself, which was general in the previous reign, was replaced by the application, to the finely-grained veneers of semi-precious woods, of brilliantly executed "bronzes,"

to use the French idiom, or *ormolu* in our term. This is not a universal rule as witness the carved wood console shown in Fig. 65. But as in England so in France, the woods employed in the 18th century were chosen for their grain and color rather than for their workability in carving. Walnut had been the medium in which all the great French wood-carving had been effected since Gothic days, and those of that great master, Hugues Sambin, of the Renaissance school of Burgundy, and the tradition of walnut carving was maintained to the middle of the 18th century. But when tulipwood, kingwood, *acajou* and amboyna became popular and were set in parquet patterns on the façade and sides of cabinets and commodes and the fronts of desk drawers, the cabinet-makers felt the need of a relief medium with which to connect the florid curves of the contour with the design of the inlay. The large majority of the finer pieces were veneered, often in "parquetted" designs. (Plates XXIX and XXX.) These parquetted pieces belong to the later years of the reign.

So the great metal workers were impressed into service and decorated the large surfaces and angles with more or less ormolu according to the character and extent of their own good taste. Caffieri over-ornamented everything he touched, though the quality of

his "bronzes" is unequalled by any of his contemporaries or successors. He was imbued with that decadent spirit in art which had caused the death of the Italian schools of painting. His technique ran away with him. Cressent very frequently was as bad, but his hand was lighter, as a true Frenchman, and his introduction of those charming female half-length figures in contemporary costume, known as "*espagnolettes*" (Plate XXVIII, b) and inspired by Watteau, gave him a right to claim indulgence from us for other sins of commission.

One of the most famous pieces of Louis XV furniture in existence is the magnificent *Bureau du Roi* (king's writing desk) in the Eighteenth Century galleries in the Louvre. (Fig. 67.) The cabinet work was begun by Oeben in 1760 and completed some nine years later by his pupil, Riesener, who after his master's death, married his widow, and carried on his business. It is one of the first pieces in which the extreme *rococo* taste of such men as Meissonnier, Oppenordt and Caffieri began to show a decline.

A return to a more normal and better taste announced itself. The sides, cylindrical top and the back are superbly decorated with marquetry designs in the best style of Riesener, who preferred dark woods, such as tulip, rosewood, holly, maple and

laburnum for his wreaths and other inlay patterns; whereas that other great *marqueteur* of the period, David Roentgen, or "David," used lighter woods which he dyed and scorched so that they always have

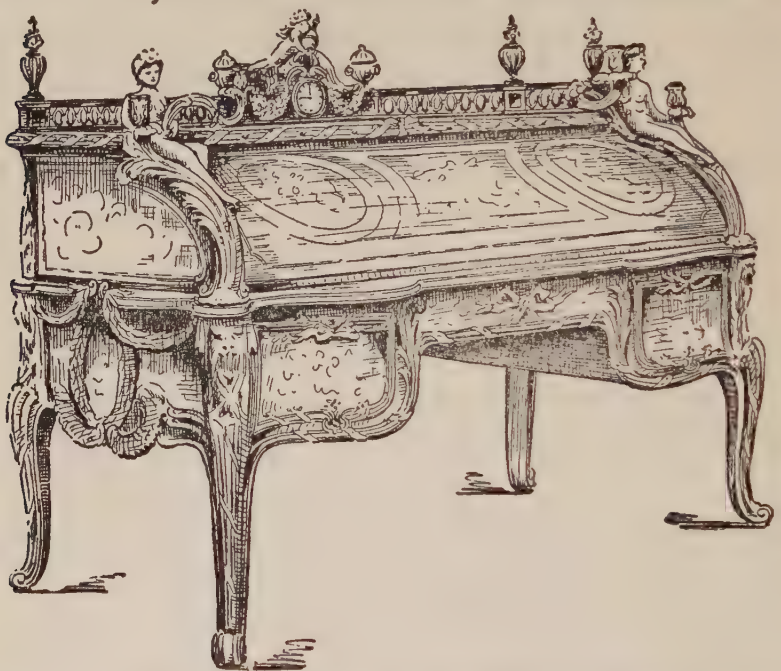


Fig. 67.—The Famous "Bureau du Roi" (King's Desk), Louvre Museum, Paris

a forced and unnatural effect, still one more manifestation of the prevalent meretricious taste. The ormolu mounts of the *Bureau du Roi* are by Herbieux, Winant, and Duplessis, three Frenchmen who were to be among those destined to help kill the insidious monster which for so many years had vitiated

the soundly-grounded national *bon goût*. Cressent himself was a Frenchman born into the tradition, the son of a sculptor and grandson of a cabinet-maker, and the exuberance displayed by him in many of his bronzes was doubtless inspired directly by the Regent and his satellites. That, in spite of this influence he kept his feet on the ground, is proved by the tasteful beauty of his *espagnolette* corners, even though some of his bronze-covered cabinet work is hard to forgive. But like the Japanese—whose type of intellectuality bears a very close analogy to that of the French, in the temperamental quality both of their keen appreciation and their criticism—the French are always willing to accept ideas from other peoples, on condition that in them they find, or believe they find, an improvement on those already in existence among themselves. And as French taste in general was at this time not at its customary high level, a number of foreign workmen came in and almost destroyed what remnants were left. The Slodtz brothers, half Flemish, half Italian; Meissonnier, as we have said, born in Turin; Caffieri, also of pure trans-alpine descent; all helped to push France along the downward path, though individually they were all such remarkably skilful masters of the technique of their profession that the public

is apt to "enthuse" over the detail, while failing to realize the awful taste of the ensemble. And then, towards the end of the reign, sanity showed signs of an approaching return. The mad search for bizarre curves which characterizes the majority of Louis XV furniture grew less and less intense; the saying that there is not a straight line to be found anywhere in the *Louis Quinze* style became inaccurate, although a purist might claim that it remains literally true, since the return of the straight line, *e.g.*, in the tops and sides of desks and cabinets, really heralded the advent of a new style, transitional between those of Louis XV proper and Louis XVI, which, in its purity, never makes use of an irregular curve. Louis XVI style curves are always geometrical.

And so it was here. But this time, curiously enough, the leading *ébénistes* saw the change coming from afar.

It is more than probable that the austere character of the Dauphin, soon to become Louis XVI, gave them a hint of the complete *volte-face* certain to come after the debaucheries of the court of Louis XV, and that with his accession to the throne the atmosphere of the court would be cleansed. So the twirls and curves, the meaningless motifs, the insipid floral carvings, the asymmetrical ornamentations, the

frantic desire to avoid lineal bi-symmetry at all costs, were quickly but systematically toned down, so gradually, in fact, that at first it was barely noticeable.

One of the clearest characteristics of this transition mode is the change from the large-piece parquetry, usually four to a panel, to small work, composed of shaded cubes placed in rows. Again, while the outer borders of parquetted and marquetry panels of the pure Louis XV style were never rectilinear, always in serpentine or rococo curves, they took on a less ornate design, generally of a thin fillet of light-toned wood, in the transition style. The borders of table and commode drawers which, again, were always curvilinear in the pure Louis XV mode, became straight, often with chamfered and even fluted pilaster or column corners. Chairs retained most of their curves, and changed indeed but little. The fluting in the chamfered corners of larger pieces is quite a late feature of this transition style, and pieces exhibiting this feature are frequently, but erroneously, termed Louis XVI. They would be more correctly styled "Marie Antoinette" while that lady was still the Dauphiness. Towards the very last years of the reign of Louis XV, even the curves of the legs flattened out considerably and became thicker at the top, so

that it was but a slight change to the straight tapering leg of the next period.

Ormolu mounts followed the general trend away from the extreme *rococo* to an orderly, almost geometric, regularity. Bi-symmetry came back into its own, as it always must,—for the eye wearies of restless, undisciplined forms,—came back all the stronger for the temporary excursion of the mode-making artists into the realm of unbridled licence and fantasy. And never since that time until the transitory vogue of the Munich secessionist movement which we called *L'Art Moderne* or *Le Nouvel Art* (1899-1903) and the present fad for restless styles, which, we venture to think, will last but little longer than its predecessor, has there been any successful attempt on the part of cabinet-makers to depart from the recognized order of symmetry and proportion.

PLATE LXIII, a. — ENGLISH WINDSOR CHAIR, WITH BACK-SPLATS AND STAYED BACK IN THE AMERICAN MANNER. (See page 322)

PLATE LXIII, b. — ENGLISH WINDSOR CHAIR WITH PIERCED SPLAT. NOTE THE POSITION OF THE LEGS IN COMPARISON WITH AMERICAN WINDSORS. (See page 322)

PLATE LXIV, a.—AMERICAN COMBINED HIGH-BACK AND COMB-BACK WINDSOR CHAIR OF NEW YORK TYPE. c. 1800. (See page 326)

PLATE LXIV, b. — ENGLISH WINDSOR CHAIR WITH CABRIOLE LEG AND CLUB FOOT, BUT OF A MUCH LATER DATE THAN QUEEN ANNE. c. 1780. (See page 326)

PLATE LXIV, c. — AMERICAN HIGH-BACK WINDSOR IN THE MARYLAND MANNER. NOTE CURVED STRETCHER. c. 1790. (See page 326)

CHAPTER XIII

THE GEORGIAN AND CHIPPENDALE STYLES

It is one of those curious anomalies which abound in the history of art, particularly of the applied arts, that the most highly-ornamented furniture that was ever produced in England, with the possible exception of a short period in the reign of Charles II, should be stamped with the name of the simplest of England's queens, one who avoided all display and ceremony as far as it lay in her power to do so. The placing of the "credit" for the first of the four Early Georgian sub-styles to Queen Anne is all the less just since this style only came into fashion after the death of the daughter of James II. And although its real name is "*Decorated* Queen Anne," a very important qualification, the descriptive adjective is only too often omitted and a wrong impression produced in the minds of those who would learn to make the finer distinctions in the styles of English furniture. Such distinctions are important if one is to place accurately the pieces of furniture made between the decline of the true Anglo-Dutch

Queen Anne style and the rise to prominence of the younger Chippendale. The Early Georgian period in furniture may be placed as between 1714, the year of the accession of the Hanoverian, George I, to the throne of England, and 1749, when the younger Chippendale withdrew from his father's workshop, and set up in business for himself in Conduit Street. It has been divided into four sub-styles, all bearing upon them the impress of a general mode, but differing in the details of the ornamentation which provides the names under which they are known. First we have the so-called "*Decorated Queen Anne*" style, which lasted from 1714 till about 1725; second, the "*Lion*" style, which remained in vogue for fifteen years from 1720; third, the "Satyr-Mask" style, fashionable from 1730 to 1740; and finally the "*Cabochon-and-Leaf*" style (1735-1749) which gradually merged into a transition style from which was evolved that of Chippen-

Fig. 68.—One Type of "Decorated Queen Anne" Leg

Fig. 69.—"Lion" Period Style Leg

dale. These four sub-sections of the Early Georgian mode are very easily distinguishable once the main characteristics are known, and in order to facilitate the retention of the typical features we have illustrated here the important ones, those from which their respective names are taken. (Figs. 68, 69 and 70.)

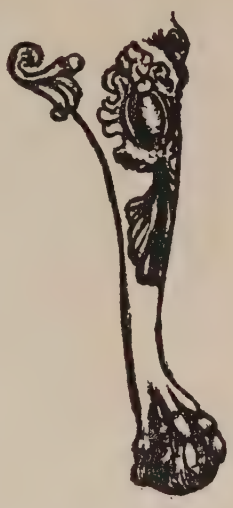


FIG. 70.—"CABOCHON-AND-LEAF" STYLE LEG

Decorated Queen Anne furniture retains many of the features of the pure style, particularly its high fiddle backs, and, up to about 1720, its feeling of graceful solidity. But the top-rails of the fiddle backs of this period are crested instead of plain as in the true Queen Anne chairs, and the whole piece is decorated with marquetry, gilding, or lacquer in a manner which distinguishes it at once from the simple Dutch pattern of the first decade of the 18th century. (Plate XXXI, a.) And by the end of the second decade the tide of bad taste was at the flow and even the "horrors" of the worst of the French *rococo* style were surpassed by the Georgian craftsmen. French artists always manage in some instinctive manner to save their products from absolute degradation,

but partly because English cabinet-designing has always been entirely dependent upon foreign inspiration—though cleverly adapted to British taste and requirements—and so falls necessarily into the class of "copies," the bad points as well as the good of the original are exaggerated and generally strengthened, because the original impulse of the creator must always remain a mystery to the imitator. No better example of such misunderstanding can be found than the early Georgian manner of treating the delicate "*pied-de-biche*" leg invented during the reign of Louis XIV. The English edition, illustrated here (Plate XXXI, b) may be sturdier, in accordance with that constant call of English customers for utilitarian strength, even in things where the requirements of daintiness seem to clash with it—and, in the last analysis, strength always bears away the palm of victory—but there is no gainsaying the fact that the "*pied-de-biche*" of the Decorated Queen Anne style is heavy and clumsy, overladen with ornament, and defaced by gilding, a parody upon the delicately-modelled French type. It is the hoof of a donkey with its rounded edges rather than the representation of a dainty doe's-foot even though it may simulate the cloven hoof of a deer.

The *rococo* feeling, that pervaded the whole of

Europe after its initiation in France, due largely, as we have seen previously, to the bad taste of foreign artists employed in that country, was rampant in Germany, and just as William III had imported into his new kingdom the simple, robust lines of the Dutch styles, and the best of the French, and by his patronage had gradually evolved an Anglicized form of them, so the Teuton monarch who now guided the destinies of England brought over with him that very worst form of the rococo which is so perfectly exemplified by the old theatre in Bayreuth and the palace of Herrenhausen in King George Ist's native state. And under that vitiating influence English sobriety of taste was submerged for a period of forty years, before the inherent sanity of the British artisan once again took control and killed the canker that was eating into it. As Horace Walpole wrote of his time: "We have now arrived at a period in which the arts have sunk to their lowest ebb in Britain. The new monarch is devoid of taste. . . . " The principal motives of the "Decorated Queen Anne" style were the naturalistic eagle-head and the ball-and-claw foot. This last feature alone will determine whether a chair or table or cabinet belongs to the pure Queen Anne style or to its germanized successor, for it did not come into use in England until about

1715. It is an adaptation of the Buddhist motif so common in Chinese art, of the dragon claw holding the sphere of eternity.

The eagle-head and claw, the latter, however, frequently absent, was seen first in the reign of James II, and derives, as already mentioned, from the arms of the Italian princely house of Modena-Este of which that monarch's second wife was a scion. In the Queen Anne period the eagle motive was conventionalized and used almost exclusively for lock- and handle-plates, though its silhouette appeared at times in the cut-out between the back splat and the outer uprights. But in the "Decorated Queen Anne" style we have the naturalistic bird either in the form of a well-carved head at the end of chair-arms or forming part of the scheme of the back as in the "mirror-back" chair in the Metropolitan Museum (Plate XXXI, c) ; sometimes even the complete bird, as in the mirror frame illustrated here. (Plate XXXII.) The eagle motif was frequently employed as decoration in the supports for heavy tables, either in the form made familiar to us by church lecterns, or in low-relief panels, finished in a naturalistic manner on both sides with the bird's head and body turned in profile. In addition to these two features we find an orgy of gilding and elaborate

carving in tables, consoles and stands for lacquered cabinets.

Grinling Gibbons (1648-1721), generally considered as belonging to the 17th rather than the 18th century, was appointed Master-Carver-in-Wood in 1714 at the munificent salary of eighteen pence (about 36 cents) a day and his remarkable, if overladen, "swags" of flowers and fruit in pear wood undoubtedly influenced the already vitiated taste of the second decade of the 18th century.

Chairs fortunately never suffered quite so badly from the gilding mania of the day and remained throughout, at least as far as the general contour was concerned, more or less of the simple Queen Anne shape. Toward the dawn of the Chippendale era they began to take on the squarer outlines which became characteristic of the most famous of English cabinetmakers.

The second phase of the Early Georgian mode, commonly known as the "Lion" style, overlaps the first by some five years. It is easily distinguishable by the lions' heads and paws which adorn the knees and serve as feet, respectively, for both table and chair legs. There is nothing quite like it in furniture elsewhere.

The third or "Satyr-Mask" style is equally

distinctive and again overlaps its predecessor. Its typical motives are the carved satyr-mask and the ball-and-claw or plain claw, or sometimes lion's paw foot. The mask, like the lion, is essentially a feature of German rococo from Herrenhausen. The mirror-back chair (Plate XXXI, c), of the Metropolitan Museum, belongs to this period, in spite of the eagle head and claw motifs and even the lion's head in the back. In furniture styles, as in architecture, a piece is dated from its latest motif.

The fourth period, which is called the "Cabochon-and-Leaf," marks the end of the predominance of German taste and the dawn of a new day for that of France. It ran from 1735-1749, and until the adoption of the Adam style, Thomas Chippendale the younger, held the public fancy. At first he followed the rococo manner and constantly refers in his *Director* and his letters to "the French taste." His designs after 1754 are clearly inspired by Louis XV furniture.

Decorated Queen Anne pieces were usually made of walnut; those of the Lion period rarely; of the Satyr-Mask still more so. The Cabochon-and-leaf was almost exclusively a mahogany product, while Chippendale seldom worked in any other wood.

Now although the vast majority of Early Geor-

Plate LXVI, a.—Late Eighteenth Century Highboy in the "Decorated Queen Anne" Style But with Very Late Marquetry Lines in Manner of Sheraton. (See page 330)

Plate LXVI, b.—Interesting Highboy (c. 1740), Lacquered in the Japanese Manner, Through the Dutch Rather Than the English Lacquer Work. (See page 330)

PLATE LXV.—AMERICAN WINDSOR CHAIR WITH FINELY-SHAPED SEAT AND A "WRITING-ARM," AND WELL-TURNED LEGS. C. 1780.
(See page 326)

gian furniture was conceived in the worst of taste, it is by no means to be inferred that nothing of artistic value was produced during the forty years which preceded Chippendale's definite establishment as the *arbiter elegantiorum* in furniture styles. Some of the lighter cabinets are quite charming and are worthy to fit in a scheme of decoration built, in general, upon severer lines. Lacquer-work both black and red with gold was immensely popular, corresponding to the "Chinese taste" so prevalent in France, always the first to recognize the beauty of the art products of the great empires of the Orient.

One of the most favored decorations of tables during the Early Georgian period was that curious mottled marble which is so puzzling to tyros. It is known as *scagliola* and is generally a mixture of black and gold and red and white with a high polish, which was used as tops for tables and bureaus. *Scagliola* is a composition of powdered gypsum, isinglass, alum and coloring matter mixed into a thick paste with pieces of marble and gold-leaf. It is laid onto a rough surface of lime and horse-hair. Adam used it sometimes to fill in flutings in marble friezes and even columns!!

Independently of the four principal sub-styles of the early Georgian era, there was a fifth, which sur-

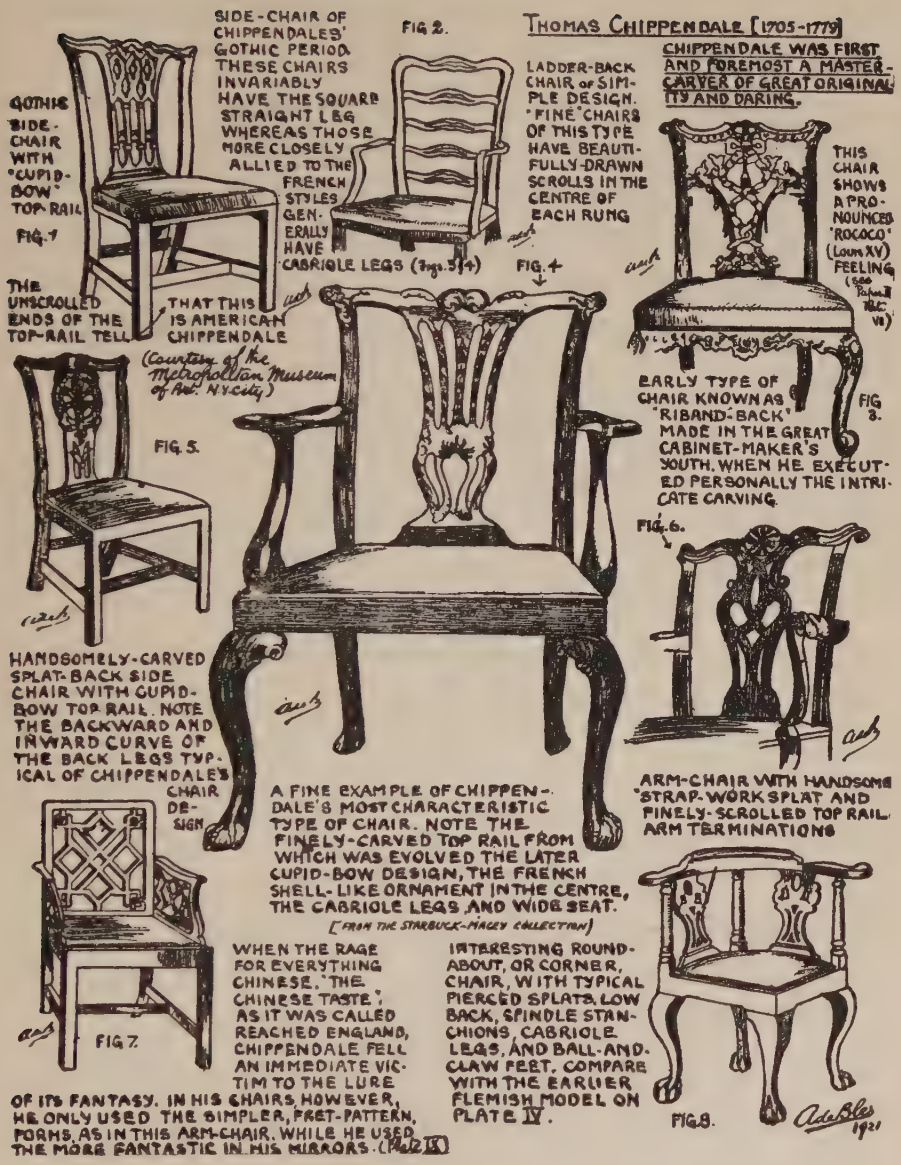
passed in grotesque exaggeration and love of gilt even the worst of the other styles. It was known as "Architects' Furniture" for it was sponsored by Sir Christopher Wren, William Kent, and their friend, Grinling Gibbons. Two tables of this style are illustrated here. (Plates XXXIII, a and XXXIII, b.) The famous Gibbons swags of flowers will be recognized immediately. Architects' Furniture was always gilded and, at times, painted black and gilded. It was in favor between 1714 and 1730 in houses which were entirely planned, including their furnishings, by Wren or one of his immediate disciples, as, later, the Adam brothers designed not only a house but all its contents.

Now in 1709, in Worcester, a son was born to a cabinet-maker of considerable skill and local renown for his work in the styles we have just described. Thomas Chippendale, Sr. was, no more than his great son, the slave of a style, and it is not difficult in a comprehensive collection of Georgian furniture to recognize the pieces which may be attributed to his workshop. There is a distinctive elegance about the quality of his curves, his half-hoop and fan-backs, which stamps them immediately as his, and helps one to understand the swift rise to fame of his son, once that most celebrated of furniture designers

had spread his wings and flown the paternal nest. Many of the pieces attributed by museum authorities all over the world to the greater Thomas Chippendale, are probably either the work of his father—though it is more than likely that from 1727 onward when the two Chippendales opened up a shop in London the younger man had a good deal to do with the designing and execution of their joint products—or of imitators. Certainly, he was responsible for much of the fine carving dating from the 1740's for, under his father's instruction, he had become the equal, in manual dexterity, of those great carvers of the French Renaissance of whom we have spoken in previous chapters. It was around the middle of the century that another important change came about in the public taste concerning timber, and mahogany took the place of walnut as the material for fine furniture. But although it was not until 1747,—when the prohibitive duty of forty dollars a ton was taken off imported mahogany,—that that wood came into general use,—walnut remaining the favorite of the less prosperous country craftsmen until 1760—yet we find it used frequently for the richer customers of the metropolis from 1720 on, for the elaborate carving that was so important a feature of Early Georgian styles was difficult to exe-

cute in walnut, with the finish required by all art connoisseurs of the 18th century. But while Chippendale executed many important pieces from the time he and his father left Worcester for London, he did not evolve his typical style until after the publication in 1754 of his famous book, *The Gentleman and Cabinet-Maker's Director*, which was in reality nothing more than a great catalogue prepared for the purpose of obtaining orders from country people who could not visit his new premises in St. Martin's Lane. Chippendale's example was followed by all the famous cabinet-makers of the latter half of the 18th century, from Ince and Mayhew to Thomas Sheraton. The *Director* plates were engraved by Matthias Darly who arrogated to himself the high-sounding title of Professor of Ornament of the Academy of Great Britain (P. O. A. G. B.). He also engraved the plates of Ince and Mayhew's *Universal System of Household Furnishing.*

Now in 1747, just about the time of Chippendale's establishment in Conduit Street, an architect named Batty Langley published his extraordinary book, *Gothick Architecture Improved by Rules and Proportions* (we retain the original spelling), and by 1754 this absurd work caught the public fancy. So neo-Gothic became the rage. Chippendale inevitably


THOMAS CHIPPENDALE [1705-1779]
CHIPPENDALE WAS FIRST AND FOREMOST A MASTER-CARVER OF GREAT ORIGINALITY AND DARING.
GOTHIC SIDE-CHAIR WITH "CUPID-BOW" TOP-RAIL
FIG. 1
THE UNSCROLLED ENDS OF THE TOP-RAIL TELL THAT THIS IS AMERICAN CHIPPENDALE
SIDE-CHAIR OF CHIPPENDALE'S GOTHIC PERIOD. THESE CHAIRS INVARIABLY HAVE THE SQUARE STRAIGHT LEG WHEREAS THOSE MORE CLOSELY ALLIED TO THE FRENCH STYLES GENERALLY HAVE CABRIOLE LEGS (Figs. 3 & 4)
FIG. 2.
LADDER-BACK CHAIR OF SIMPLE DESIGN. "FINE" CHAIRS OF THIS TYPE HAVE BEAUTIFULLY-DRAWN SCROLLS IN THE CENTRE OF EACH RUNG
FIG. 4
THIS CHAIR SHOWS A PRONOUNCED "ROCOCO" (Louis XV) FEELING (See Part II Vol. VI)
(Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y. city)
FIG. 5.
EARLY TYPE OF CHAIR KNOWN AS "RIBAND-BACK" MADE IN THE GREAT CABINET-MAKER'S YOUTH, WHEN HE EXECUTED PERSONALLY THE INTRICATE CARVING.
FIG 3.
FIG. 6.
HANDSOMELY-CARVED SPLAT-BACK SIDE CHAIR WITH CUPID-BOW TOP RAIL. NOTE THE BACKWARD AND INWARD CURVE OF THE BACK LEGS TYPICAL OF CHIPPENDALE'S CHAIR DESIGN
A FINE EXAMPLE OF CHIPPENDALE'S MOST CHARACTERISTIC TYPE OF CHAIR. NOTE THE FINELY-CARVED TOP RAIL FROM WHICH WAS EVOLVED THE LATER CUPID-BOW DESIGN, THE FRENCH SHELL-LIKE ORNAMENT IN THE CENTRE, THE CABRIOLE LEGS AND WIDE SEAT.
[FROM THE STARBUCK-MACEY COLLECTION]
ARM-CHAIR WITH HANDSOME "STRAP-WORK SPLAT AND FINELY-SCROLLED TOP RAIL. ARM TERMINATIONS
FIG. 7.
WHEN THE RAGE FOR EVERYTHING CHINESE, "THE CHINESE TASTE", AS IT WAS CALLED REACHED ENGLAND, CHIPPENDALE FELL AN IMMEDIATE VICTIM TO THE LURE OF ITS FANTASY. IN HIS CHAIRS, HOWEVER, HE ONLY USED THE SIMPLER, FRET-PATTERN, FORMS, AS IN THIS ARM-CHAIR, WHILE HE USED THE MORE FANTASTIC IN HIS MIRRORS. (Plate IX)
INTERESTING ROUNDABOUT, OR CORNER, CHAIR, WITH TYPICAL PIERCED SPLATS, LOW BACK, SPINDLE STANCHIONS, CABRIOLE LEGS, AND BALL-AND-CLAW FEET. COMPARE WITH THE EARLIER FLEMISH MODEL ON PLATE IV.
FIG. 8.
Ad. Bles 1921

fell under its sway, but with more true artistic sentiment than he showed in some of his other designs he tried to simplify the adaptation of Gothic in his chairs as much as possible. One of his earliest in this manner has a back imitating a "four-light" window with a single pointed arch window on each side of a double one containing two smaller single lights. It is characteristic of the lack of understanding of real Gothic by these 18th century "improvers" that Chippendale placed no arch over the four lights to enclose them as there would be in the windows he was imitating. This particular type of Gothic Chippendale soon was abandoned, for, in spite of its imperfections, it was too good for a society fascinated by Batty Langley's "improved Gothic." But both Chippendale's Gothic and his Chinese styles were rather caterings to the wishes of his wealthy patrons than expressions of his own taste, and his *Director* shows a preponderance of designs in interlaced strapwork, ladder backs, both simple and ornamental, and vertically-pierced splat-backs. In his pre-*Director* years he was still influenced by the Decorated Queen Anne style with its half-hood-and-splat back, the splat pierced, but after the publication of his first edition, the "cupid-bow" top rail and other square patterns become the characteristic features of his chairs. The

so-called "riband-back" chairs, brilliantly carved with interlaced wavy ribbons, belong to this earlier Conduit Street period. In his Chinese manner his best chairs are those designed in rectilinear fret patterns, following the true Chinese model illustrated here. (See Plate XXXV and detail of Line Plate XXXIV in text.)

He used the same fret design for bookcase doors and similar pieces. Most of his mirror frames are in pseudo-Chinese taste, composed of the well-known pagoda, cascade, and rocaille motifs, with the *Feng-Huang*, or Chinese phoenix, always in evidence.

Chippendale invented all manner of new articles of furniture, such as wine-coolers, fire-screens and sideboards, and brought back again the four-poster and tester beds of the 16th century. But, strange as it may appear, his genius seems to have inspired no true school—it was too personal—and with his disappearance, new styles set in, along lines completely opposed to those which enjoyed so tremendous a vogue in the hands of this giant of all master-craftsmen.

In 1753, Chippendale opened his workshops at 60, St. Martin's Lane where, after he became the fashion, all London society visited him, in a manner recalling the adulation bestowed by sovereigns and

nobles upon the great artists of the Italian Renaissance, but rarely seen in England, where even a genius of the applied arts who sold his own products was simply a "tradesman" with all the disqualifications that word implied in the 18th century. Chippendale was the inevitable exception that proves the rule. Moreover, even in his lifetime his wares fetched enormous prices for those times. A mirror of the type illustrated here (Fig. 71) was wont to fetch from a thousand to fifteen hundred dollars, so that present-day purchasers of genuine Chippendale products—they are extremely rare—should not be surprised at the prices asked for them by those dealers who are able to give proof of the authenticity of the pieces attributed to the master. Chippendale was first and foremost a great carver, and it is in the quality of the

FIG. 71.—CHIPPENDALE MIRROR.

carving that one should look for the authenticity, or at least a strong presumption thereof, of any work supposed to be by him. But, naturally, when his vogue became great and much time had to be given up to his patrons, the great cabinet-maker did less work himself, and left most of it in the hands of his subordinates. But he carefully supervised the execution of the pieces that left his workshop and so we find in the genuine products of his shop a finish and a *maestria* that is absent from those "Chippendale" pieces which have nothing of the true products save their name and their general outline. They are like copies of any other true work of art, like a first-rate copy of a Rembrandt; everything is there but the touch of the master!

It is safe, however, to say that unless the pedigree of a "Chippendale" piece can be proved conclusively by the production of the bill for its manufacture, there is nor can be any certainty of Chippendale's participation in its fabrication, for, especially after the publication of his "*Director*," he had numerous imitators: Edwards and Darley, who specialized in the "Chinese style"; Thomas Johnson and Mathias Lock, who imitated particularly the Chippendale Chinese mirrors; Ince and Mayhew, and Robert Manwaring, to whom Chippen-

dale's tables and chairs seemed worthy of reproduction and adaptation; and W. and S. Halfpenny, many of whose "Chinese" mirrors are indeed very close to those of the master. In buying such furniture it were always wiser to consult an expert, for in spite of the apparent resemblance, there are small differ-

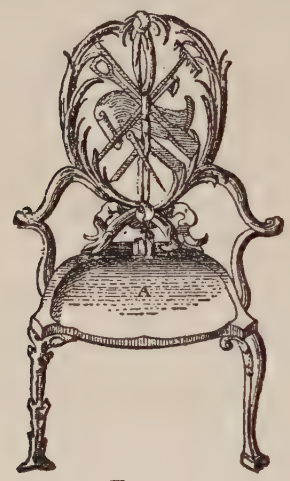


FIG. 72.

FIG. 73.

These reproductions of Chippendale's own drawings give some idea of the extravagant lengths to which he went, at times, in search of originality. The differences of the two sides of these two designs indicate the craftsman's suggestions for an alternate treatment of the arms and legs.

ences which it is impossible to set down here in detail.

Not all of Chippendale's designs were good nor even passable, for like all the most prominent cabinet-makers of the day when these plebeians were

treated as great artists, Chippendale frequently lost his sense of balance, and designed appalling pieces, which in ugliness are only equalled by Sheraton's worst. The cuts on this and the preceding pages are not caricatures of Chippendale's work, but reproductions of designs in his own somewhat overestimated "Director."

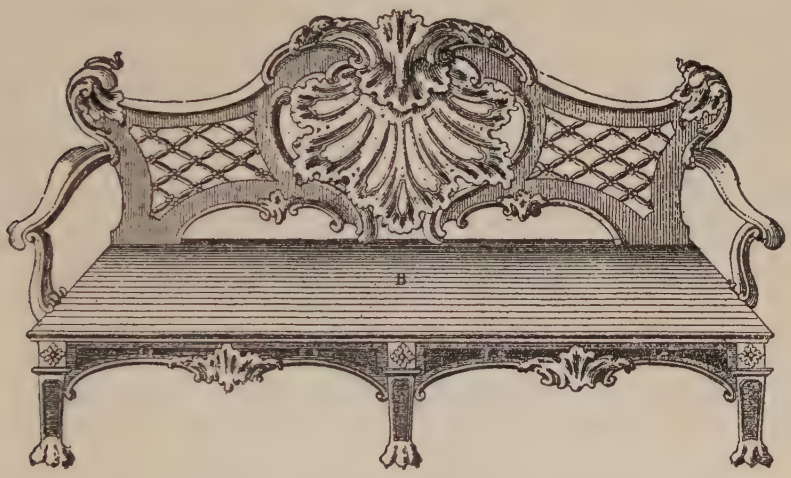


Fig. 74.

A settee designed by Thomas Chippendale—published in his "Director"—and a good example of the taste of the day, as interpreted by the leader of furniture fashions.

CHAPTER XIV

THE LOUIS XVI, DIRECTOIRE AND EMPIRE STYLES

If the Regency and Louis XV styles were extravagant and inspired in many cases by extremely bad taste, they *were* at least inspired. The *feu sacré* of the vandal sometimes burns more fiercely than that of the regular builder! The style we call Louis XVI, charming, debonnair, perfectly adapted to the habits of a colorless monarch, was certainly not inspired, in the big sense of the word. It was a return to the coldly classical, after a period of wild artistic debauch. Like Antæus taking new strength from his Mother Earth in his struggle with Hercules, the French, invariably, inevitably, return to the established models in art after some adventurous roving into the realm of fantasy. We saw how this was true when Gothic architecture had fallen from its pristine beauty of simplicity into a tortured thing of meaningless arches having no bearing on constructional strength, of exaggerated ornament, and even of metal imitations of what had once been sublimely beautiful carving in stone.

The pendulum of cultured taste, always innately good in matters of art among the French, swung back in the 16th century to the monuments of Greece and Rome. And again we saw how the over-elaborate wood-carving of the Sambin and du Cerceau schools of furniture design brought about the reaction towards simplicity of both contour and detail in the reign of Henry IV, the transitional period of Louis XIII and the early part of the reign of the *Roi-Soleil*. So, with a blasé nobility wearied once more by the exuberance of the Regency and that art of the reign of Louis XV dominated by Madame de Pompadour, a trend toward another revival of the classic made itself felt, as we noted in an earlier chapter, even before the close of the reign.

In this fact is to be found the strongest argument of those who favor a new distribution of style titles in French furniture, on the ground that the names of the kings alone cover periods too long or too much fraught with mode-changing incidents to give a clear idea of the many sub-styles with which we come into contact during the last three-quarters of the 18th century. This is particularly true of the Louis XV period, which produced such important subdivisions as we have described in a previous chapter. And the changes which began to take place in the design of

furniture from 1769 onward were due to a greater extent than is generally known to the last of Louis XVth's favorites, the lovely milliner's apprentice, Jeanne Becu, who became notorious under the name and title of Countess duBarry. In 1769 Louis presented her with the fine old Château de Louveciennes, which she caused to be furnished with a restraint and good taste contrasting strangely with the extravagances in conduct and expenditure which made her name execrated throughout the length and breadth of France. Although lacking completely the education and intellectual equipment of the Marquise de Pompadour, *la* duBarry felt that she also must have her own accredited artists and craftsmen, for she soon realized that in an age when all men thought in terms of art, her continued success would depend to a great extent upon her capacity for keeping up with the general tendency in court circles.

And so an opening was made for a young designer and metal worker, Gouthière, who decorated the château for the new favorite and displayed not only excellent taste in his conception of what was fitting as her surroundings, but also such remarkable skill in the execution of ormolu mounts, that his reputation was made instantly, and his name elevated even above that of the great Caffieri in the

minds of contemporaneous patrons of art. Two exquisite *vernis-martin* cabinets by Riesener, decorated with ormolu mounts by Gouthière, for *Queen* Marie Antoinette and bearing her monogram in the metalwork, are now in the Metropolitan Museum. They prove definitely the claim of both men to a place on the pinnacle of supreme artistry. The sharply-cut ribbons and flower garlands in "bronze" by Gouthière are inimitable, perfect in design as well as in execution. They should be examined carefully by every collector and would-be collector as the criterion of craftsmanship beyond which it is impossible to reach. (Plate XXXVI.)

Gouthière was only about thirty years old when he was adopted as her special protégé by Madame duBarry, but the combination of his undoubted talent and the influence of his employer helped him to establish those designs which served as a bridge between the nefarious curves of the ultra-rococo and the rectilinear or geometrical contours of the pure Louis XVI style.

Thus it came about that the transition from the Louis XV style to that of Louis XVI took place not in the early years of the latter reign, as was usually the case in furniture evolution or transformation, but during the last five years of the earlier one, and

that when Louis XVI mounted the throne with his beautiful Austrian princess, Marie Antoinette, in 1774, the style which bears the name of *Louis Seize* was already almost established in France.

Now although the portly, home-loving monarch was too lethargic, too little interested in art development, to have any personal influence on the taste of his court and its sycophantic imitators, Marie Antoinette, descended from the long line of highly-cultured Hapsburgs, did much to give the Louis XVI style that exquisite finish, that fineness of proportion and perfection of ornamental detail which have made this mode not only a standard for future generations to build by, but also inspired the great English styles of the latter half of the 18th century when Robert Adam, Hepplewhite, Shearer and Sheraton also adopted rectilinear contours after the demise of the anglicised rococo forms of Thomas Chippendale and his imitators.

The Louis XVI style is characterized by a total absence of irresponsible curves, by rectilinear contours in all major portions, by a revival of classical frieze and moulding ornaments, and other minor details,—possessing, however, considerable importance,—of which we shall speak presently. There will be some who may object to this statement about the

absence of free curves on the ground that some Louis XVI pieces, such as gueridons, commodes and desks, have the French form of the cabriole leg, but it can not be too strongly emphasized that such pieces belong to the transitional period, the Marie Antoinette, *as Princess*, or, if you like, the duBarry style, and do not belong to the Louis XVI *period* proper. This is a mistake that is made in much of the cataloguing of furniture collections. This style has been given the name of "Marie Antoinette" which is misleading, for it was in vogue when that unfortunate Queen was still but the wife of the Dauphin —eldest son of the reigning sovereign—not during her own reign with Louis XVI on the throne.

It may safely be said, therefore, that the only curves which appear in the constructional lines of Louis Seize furniture are the geometric ovals and circles used frequently in chair backs, oval or circular gueridon tops, an occasional console support composed of two reversed semi-circles, or a regular section of an oval or ellipse in a chair or settee back. Irregular or free curves are never found. Our illustrations will give a clearer understanding of the distinctive forms of pure Louis XVI furniture than any written description can provide.

The most typical feature in the constructional

details of Louis XVI furniture is the leg. It is slender and tapering in chairs, generally fluted; the flutings of more costly chairs often filled for part of their length by husk-pattern carvings. (Plate XXXVII, a.) A rounded moulding forms a collar at the upper end and a similar one, or a "cup" of acanthus leaves at the lower, the leg terminating in a plain cylindrical foot a couple of inches in height. In more elaborate pieces this foot is replaced by a moulded button as in the wide oval-backed chair, in the Metropolitan Museum. (Plate XXXVII, b.) There are, as always, exceptions to the rule. The fluting frequently gives place in richer pieces to a rope effect, terminating in the acanthus cup, and we show here two quite characteristic chairs in one of which fluted architectural columns are used as supports, while in the other a square leg with a single "canal" takes the place of the usual round leg. Except in such rare exceptions as the twelve-legged *bureau-à-cylindre* (Plate XXXVIII)—which is a late, almost transitional piece—the legs of Louis XVI furniture are always straight and taper downwards. In pieces like the fine commode by Weiswiller (Plate XXXIX), which have only a short leg, it is in a squat pedestal form, generally round, but sometimes square.

At the corners of square-seated chairs and the ends of mantels, or angle of a bed when a leg-shaped half-detached column is employed, there is always to be seen either a square frame or an unframed "platform" of the same shape immediately above the leg. In chairs and other pieces of movable furniture, this square space is filled with a rosette, round or squared—the most characteristic form—when the square space is framed. When it is left unframed—which is rarely—the rosette is invariably round.

Toward the end of the reign, when another transition toward the Pompeian style began to appear, the legs, while still tapering, were unfluted.

The arms of fauteuils spring from the contour of the back and descend in a graceful curve to the required height with a padded cushion in the centre, and parallel to each other.

The typical Louis XVI arm is shorter than the depth of the chair and descends to its front corner in a smooth curve, carved with some classical moulding ornament such as the string of piastres or beads or one of the many variants of the meander or *guilloche*, or as on the exquisite settee (Plate XL), the stick and ribbon motive. The cresting ornament of this settee is a good example of the "trophy" of musical instruments which form so typical a feature

of panel devices in the style of Louis XVI. It is, however, unusual to find it as placed here. The most common treatment of the cresting is a carved bow of wavy ribbon mingled with full-blown roses and foliage. The ribbon bow shares, with the pearl or bead motive moulding and the square ornament above the leg, the honor of being the most characteristic of Louis XVI details, to such a degree indeed that one rarely sees a piece of absolutely pure Louis XVI furniture without it, either in the woodwork or in the pattern of the tapestry or patterned silk upholstery.

The *causeuse* type of settee with its curving back and enveloping arms, so popular in the previous reign, still maintained its vogue under the new sovereign, but it is always distinguishable from its forbear by its straight legs.

Chairs and settees were upholstered either with Aubusson or Beauvais tapestry, designed and shaped specially to fit the back, or in the smaller circular-backed chairs and completely covered wing chairs in silk and satin striped materials, always in delicate pastel tones as befitted so dainty a style as that of *Louis Seize.*

Such are, then, the outstanding features of the style, though it must not be thought that pieces of

PLATE LXVII, a.—TYPICAL RHODE ISLAND BLOCK-FRONT COMMODE, OF THE JOHN GODDARD SCHOOL (SEE FRONTISPIECE). THIS PIECE IS SIGNED "TOWNSEND." THE FINISH IS NOT SO FINE AS THE GODDARD PIECES. (See page 331)

PLATE LXVII, b.—KETTLEDRUM CUPBOARD-COMMODE, WITH ARCHITECTURAL TOP SECTION. PHILADELPHIA SCHOOL. (See page 332)

Plate LXVIII, a.—Superbly-built Chippendalesque Highboy by William Savery of Philadelphia. A Similar Piece Fetched $44,000 at the Reifsnyder Sale in 1929. (See page 333)

Plate LXVIII, b.—Lowboy, Companion Piece to LXVIII, a. Note Exquisite Carving and Applied Work, and the Typical Large Handle-plates. (See page 333)

similar lines but differing in ornamental detail are necessarily impure. There are numerous exceptions to all rules in furniture-making, and the individual taste of the customer was responsible in many cases for the very handsome "freak" pieces which apparently transgress every law of the masters who governed the designing in each of the major styles.

In view of an incomprehensible error on the part of Mr. Strange in the text of his profusely illustrated book on "French Interiors, etc., of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," wherein he tells us that the letters "M.E." after the name of a great cabinet-maker are an abbreviation of the word *menuisier*, meaning "carpenter," it may be well to point out that such an interpretation is a libel upon a great and very powerful guild of master craftsmen. The letters mean *Maître-ebéniste* (Master Cabinet-maker), to which title they fell heir upon their admission into the Paris corporation of cabinet-makers, of whose formation we spoke in an early chapter.

The most famous of the masters of the Louis XVI style were Riesener, Roentgen, Popsel, Boudin, Weiswiller, Leleu, the Jacobs, Bénemann, Carlin, Rubestuck, Mewesent, Dufour, Cosson, Jacques Birckle, and of course Gouthière.

Then in 1789 came the great upheaval, the Revo-

lution, in the eddies of which, during several years of bloodshed and vandalism, the glorious old traditions of France sank one by one. Among the privileged classes was counted the Cabinet-Makers' Guild. This was no aristocratic body, but simply a sort of trade-union, which differed from the latter-day variety in that it served not alone the interests of its proletariat membership, but also those of its clientèle by denying entry to its ranks to all who could not pass the tests of mastery in their art. Yet its privileges, bought dearly at the cost of centuries of conscientious work, were like a red rag to the mad agitators of the revolutionary crowds, and, immediately after the deposition of the king, the ancient guild was also dethroned and shorn of its rights and privileges. The chief result of this iconoclastic action was to destroy that collaboration between workers in different branches of cabinet-making which was so largely responsible for the fame of the styles of the Renaissance and the four Louis. Instead of working together, each specialist doing his own particular job in the construction of a piece of furniture, the modern method came into use, and one man would try to produce pieces entirely from his own hand. Thence came a slovenliness both of design and workmanship which was new to France. And in the gen-

eral hate of everything that had breathed the atmosphere of royalty and aristocracy, designers went beyond the confines of France for their inspiration. In 1748, excavations had been commenced at Pompeii, some thirty years after the discovery of its buried sister-city of Herculaneum, and it was upon the remarkable designs of rooms, and the exquisite

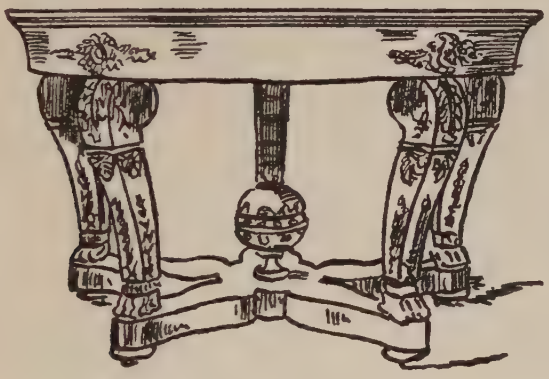


Fig. 75.—Typical Empire Table

mural paintings unfolded by the workers that the artists of the Directory based the plans of the so-called "Directoire" style, never a good one, but possessed of certain pleasing features which have given it waves of popularity at various times.

But from it evolved the more important Empire style, rarely in good taste, heavy and clumsily laden with pseudo-classical ornaments in thin tinny ormolu, a long drop from the fine, spontaneous

Fig. 76.

bronzes of Caffieri, Cressent, Gouthière, and their school. (Plate XLI.) Here Rome of the grand days, and Egypt, as a reminder of Napoleon's great campaign in that land, offered the inspiration, but as can be readily understood, the Empire style bears many of the worst characteristics of the parvenu. It is ornate, teeming with stiff curves, and generally wearing on its face a constant reminder of the newly-acquired greatness of the Emperor. (Fig. 75.)

The classic Antefix in its Roman form, the Bay-Leaf garland, the symbolic Eagle, the Phrygian Cap, the Lictors' Fasces (Fig. 76), the Athenian Bee, Egyptian Sphinxes, Swans, Winged Victories, Assyrian Winged Bulls, Trophies of Weapons, with the conqueror's Wreath of Laurel surrounding the N. of his name, were among

the most commonly used motives, while mahogany, with ormolu mounts, was employed almost exclusively for the woodwork.

The mirror (Plate XLII) is a typical piece of Empire furniture. In spite of its artistic deficiencies, it is hardly too much to say that the Empire style exercised a greater influence over cabinet-making in England and America than any of the immediately preceding types. Even Sheraton was forced to bend before the strength of the Empire hurricane. At least *he* had the grace to lament the necessity thereof and state that the pieces he was obliged to design in imitation of French Empire were not worthy of bearing his name. And one has only to look at American Empire, or Colonial furniture as it is often termed erroneously, to see to what depths of degraded taste early Republican America was led by the very natural desire to adopt the ideas of the country which had succored her in her hour of need.

CHAPTER XV

THE ADAM OR ADELPHI STYLE

THE Adam Brothers,—there were four of them—like Hepplewhite, Shearer and Sheraton—in his best period—and their legions of imitators, were all children of the neo-classic style of France, which in its turn was but a return to almost "purist" Renaissance classicism—of the Italian type—after the wild outpourings of the late Louis XIV, the Regency and Louis XV designers and craftsmen. It must be remembered always that the normally-minded man or woman finds it essential to his or her peace of mind to be surrounded by reposeful—not restless—contours of furniture and its accessories. It is precisely that quality of tranquillity, inherent in it, which gives to true hellenic art—as distinct from the decadent hellenistic—its immortal quality. It also explains why we shall never get far away from straight lines and regular curves; why the present movement towards a "new" furniture style cannot last much longer than the Munich secessionist movement—

which in France was called *"L'Art Moderne"* or *"Le Nouvel Art"*—endured; and why there never has been any permanent style save the classic Greek or Greco-Roman, nor ever can be. Even the Gothic, though exquisitely beautiful in contour, ornament, proportion, and balance, was but a phase as far as furniture is concerned, and then was but a reproduction *in petto* of the architectural style, which itself could not endure.

The chief point to remember about the Adelphi —the Adam Brothers—is that they were not furniture *makers* in any sense of the word. They were architects solely, unless we are willing to throw back the popular art of Interior Decoration nearly 200 years. They only *designed* furniture to suit the houses, palaces and public buildings they were called upon to erect. Hence it follows that the amount of genuine Adam furniture on the market is very small. It also follows that all the best cabinet-makers, as such, who flourished during the period of Robert Adam's popularity—from 1762 to his death in 1792 —including the great Chippendale, then Hepplewhite and all the others—executed the cabinet-work (*ébénisterie*) required by him for his houses, and worked to his designs. It is due to Adam, however —and we cannot but hold this fact against him—

that the fine old English craft of wood-carving was definitely abandoned, and the pseudo-art of "stucco" or "compo," as it was called in those days, took its place.

Robert Adam's long sojourn in Italy,—nearly ten years, during which he encountered innumerable difficulties, comprising at one time being arrested as a spy—was responsible for the revival of Pompeian and Roman classicism, which with an infinitely delicate hand and innate taste, he applied—unfortunately in stucco—to the ceilings and panels and mantels of the houses he designed. Indeed, his style was so characteristically light, charming—we might almost say—feathery, that he paved the way for the Hepplewhite and Sheraton styles, the use of satinwood and the products of a great master in another classic art, treated in a classic manner, *viz.*, the ceramic ovals and circles of Josiah Wedgwood, designed by John Flaxman. In the Metropolitan Museum of Art, there is a piano ascribed to Sheraton. Now Sheraton was, like Adam, only a designer, not a practical cabinet-maker. But the piano itself gives proof of an incorrect attribution even though, in this case, it can be backed up by the sole absolute evidence of provenance from any particular shop. So let us see why we deny to Sheraton the right

to the attribution of this particular piece. Firstly, we find the inlay of Wedgwood plaques, surrounded by a string of gilded metal beads and "bronze" ornaments in many places. These are Adam characteristics. Secondly, the shape of the body and the legs is unquestionably that of the Hepplewhite manner, particularly the concave curve on the right as we sit at the key-board, and the square, tapering legs. Thirdly, the pointed oval inlay is *not* that which is so typical of Sheraton, with his exquisitely-shaped ellipses, but again Adamesque. Fourthly, the fine marquetry into satinwood is much darker than Sheraton ever used—he preferred to inlay with a lighter-colored wood "purfling." But, the inner line of marquetry and the curve-sided V's, facing each other, on the lid *were* certainly designed by, and executed under the supervision of Sheraton himself, and as that would be the last detail in the finish, he, in all likelihood, sent the bill in his own name to Manuel de Godoy, the "Prince of Peace," and favorite of the dissolute queen of a not much better monarch, Charles IV of Spain, of which three personages, Goya's portraits, teeming with a skilfully hidden caricaturisation, are among his greatest works.

The Adam style, like all English styles, is exotic,

rather than a pure product of England, and contains not only Italian but also many French elements. In his earlier manner he still employs the curvilinear contours of the large side-table, *e.g.*, the console in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. (Plate XLIII, a.) That in itself is a French feature of the Louis XV style, while at the same time he designed, for this very table, legs which are not only straight, but broken up into several sections, one of which is a fern-like cup, *hanging down*, above another section of the same height, in the Louis XVI tapering, fluted, style. It is frankly bad art, and must be a product of his very early years. At the same time the frieze beneath the table top is carved in the form of an elongated up-ended classic "*guilloche*"; filled with a flower design. And right against it over a more or less square rosette above each leg—as in the Louis XVI style—is a wheel-like "*patera*" *lying flat* on its side, a distinct and most inartistic contrast to the similar *patera*-shaped meander motive standing on end right beside it.

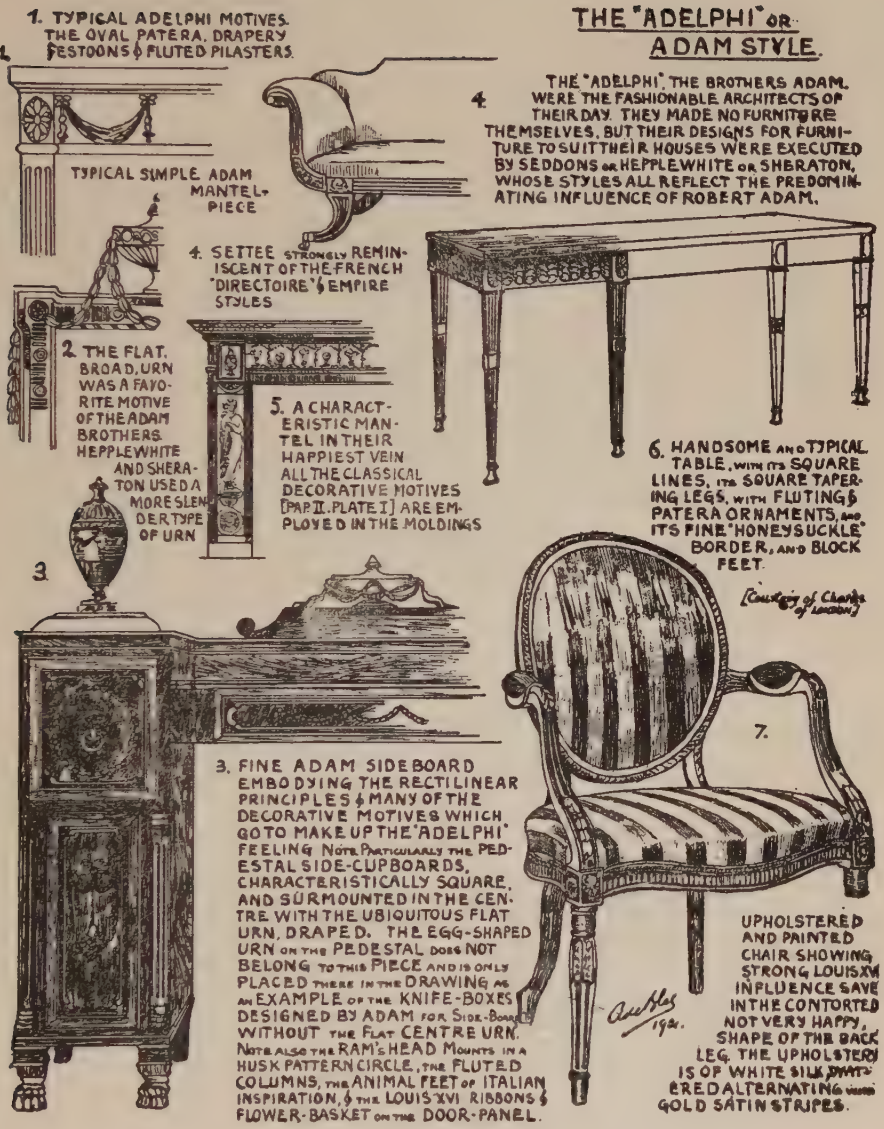
Heretical as it may appear, we must acknowledge that, at times, neither Adam nor Sheraton were any better than Chippendale himself when it came to bad design. Chippendale's own "Director" is the jury that brings in the verdict of "guilty" against him, for,

as we have seen, many of his designs are not only atrocious copies of the worst French *ébénistiers* of the *rococo* period, but, in many cases, were inexecutable. Similarly, Robert Adam made many bad errors of taste, though as a rule his touch was lighter than that of his contemporaries. Nevertheless he was capable of such careless proportioning as the legs of the mahogany wine-cooler at the Metropolitan, which, obviously inspired by the Louis XVI style, have none of its grace; they are heavy and clumsy. Another table and a chair in the Metropolitan also show how Adam, while remembering and noting down certain features, forgot others, often of considerable importance, or misunderstood the origin of motives which, consequently, he misapplied.

On the whole, however, Robert Adam's life in Italy during which he made innumerable sketches, made of him an architect-decorator of artistic value, while his fame, through his building of the Adelphi Terrace and Harewood House, the town seat of the father-in-law of Princess Mary; the gate and screen of the Admiralty; Lord Mansfield's houses at Caen Wood, Highgate and Luton Loo; and in London again, Portland Place and a part of Finsbury, placed him in a position of prominence from which he was able to dominate the entirety of English decorative

work during his lifetime, particularly as from 1762-1768 he held the official position of "Sole Architect to the King and the Board of Works." The landmarks he bequeathed to his successors were principally wreaths, or drooping garlands of flowers—a French Louis XVI decoration—the honeysuckle, which he may have derived directly from the Greek anthemion, and which soon became a typical and a favorite motive of the elder Hepplewhite and his successors and imitators, and the fan pattern which again was, in all probability, a debased form of the long-lived shell motive.

Robert Adam's work is easily recognized—or should we say the work of the Adam school and its imitators—by its Pompeian combinations of *pateræ* and oblongs, connected with light wiry beaded lines in graceful curves. The cresting of his mirrors, for example, are in the style, with spirals of wiry thinness rising to an apex, sometimes composed of an eagle, sometimes of an urn, sometimes of a simple rosette. (Plate XLIII, b.) The *Encyclopedia Britannica* says that Robert Adam was to England what the Louis XVI style was to France. But that analogy is both too easy and too loose to stand as authority. Robert Adam brought to England a Pompeian style strongly tinged with the Louis XVI color. His wheel-back


1. TYPICAL ADELPHI MOTIVES. THE OVAL PATERA, DRAPERY FESTOONS & FLUTED PILASTERS.
THE "ADELPHI" OR ADAM STYLE.
THE "ADELPHI" THE BROTHERS ADAM, WERE THE FASHIONABLE ARCHITECTS OF THEIR DAY. THEY MADE NO FURNITURE THEMSELVES, BUT THEIR DESIGNS FOR FURNITURE TO SUIT THEIR HOUSES WERE EXECUTED BY SEDDONS OR HEPPLEWHITE OR SHERATON, WHOSE STYLES ALL REFLECT THE PREDOMINATING INFLUENCE OF ROBERT ADAM.
TYPICAL SIMPLE ADAM MANTELPIECE
4. SETTEE STRONGLY REMINISCENT OF THE FRENCH "DIRECTOIRE" & EMPIRE STYLES
2. THE FLAT, BROAD, URN WAS A FAVORITE MOTIVE OF THE ADAM BROTHERS. HEPPLEWHITE AND SHERATON USED A MORE SLENDER TYPE OF URN
5. A CHARACTERISTIC MANTEL IN THEIR HAPPIEST VEIN ALL THE CLASSICAL DECORATIVE MOTIVES [PAP II. PLATE I] ARE EMPLOYED IN THE MOLDINGS
6. HANDSOME AND TYPICAL TABLE, WITH ITS SQUARE LINES, ITS SQUARE TAPERING LEGS, WITH FLUTING & PATERA ORNAMENTS, AND ITS FINE "HONEYSUCKLE" BORDER, AND BLOCK FEET.
3.
(Courtesy of Charles of London)
7.
3. FINE ADAM SIDEBOARD EMBODYING THE RECTILINEAR PRINCIPLES & MANY OF THE DECORATIVE MOTIVES WHICH GO TO MAKE UP THE "ADELPHI" FEELING NOTE PARTICULARLY THE PEDESTAL SIDE-CUPBOARDS, CHARACTERISTICALLY SQUARE, AND SURMOUNTED IN THE CENTRE WITH THE UBIQUITOUS FLAT URN, DRAPED. THE EGG-SHAPED URN ON THE PEDESTAL DOES NOT BELONG TO THIS PIECE AND IS ONLY PLACED THERE IN THE DRAWING AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE KNIFE-BOXES DESIGNED BY ADAM FOR SIDE-BOARDS WITHOUT THE FLAT CENTRE URN. NOTE ALSO THE RAM'S HEAD MOUNTS IN A HUSK PATTERN CIRCLE, THE FLUTED COLUMNS, THE ANIMAL FEET OF ITALIAN INSPIRATION, & THE LOUIS XVI RIBBONS & FLOWER-BASKET ON THE DOOR-PANEL.
UPHOLSTERED AND PAINTED CHAIR SHOWING STRONG LOUIS XVI INFLUENCE SAVE IN THE CONTORTED NOT VERY HAPPY, SHAPE OF THE BACK LEG. THE UPHOLSTERY IS OF WHITE SILK DIAPERED ALTERNATING WITH GOLD SATIN STRIPES.

chairs—which one author ascribes to Hepplewhite's genius for chair-design—were French in contour. His side-boards were at times French, at others Italian-French, or again, Pompeian in feeling. The Louis XVI style was, as we have shown, the combined product of many great artists, comprising carvers in wood and metal work, parquetry and marquetry experts of the highest degree of skill; "*vernis-martin*" (French lacquer) masters; all working in collaboration with the greatest painters and draughtsmen of the day.

In short, the Adam style was the product of a skilled, tasteful, somewhat overrated architect, whereas that of Louis XVI was the work of great artists. A wide difference! Yet, despite Adam's "chiqué" use of stucco to avoid the trouble and delay of the fine old art of wood-carving, we cannot refuse him the honor of "dragging back" the British taste to normal after the effusiveness to which Chippendale in his more original moments had subjected it. The guilds were no longer anything but names, and so we may, perhaps, consider the supreme honor paid to Robert Adam in burying him in London's Pantheon, Westminster Abbey, as not altogether undeserved.

CHAPTER XVI

THE HEPPLEWHITE STYLE

If it is difficult to assign definitely to the Chippendale shops or to Robert Adam the attribution of furniture given their names and sold by even reputable dealers as the product of these men who at times showed genius, it is even less possible to be sure of a genuine Hepplewhite piece, for his book, "The Cabinet-maker and Upholsterer's Guide," appeared two years after the death of George Hepplewhite, that is to say, in 1788, when the firm had been continued for two years by his successors, A. Hepplewhite & Co. Therefore, it is more than probable that designs appeared in it with which one of our greatest cabinet-makers had nothing at all to do. For furniture modes changed every few months in those days preceding the French Revolution. In France, the Louis XVI style was already in process of transition, owing to the vogue of the new discoveries unearthed at Herculaneum and Pompeii (1763 A.D. onward.) A neo-classicism developed from the

remains of the ancient *magna Grecia* cities, which found its fuller expression in the Directoire and Empire styles and in the paintings of David and his followers. Painted furniture which Robert Adam had instituted, by having his pieces decorated by Angelica Kauffmann, Cipriani, and Pergolese, remained in fashion while Hepplewhite worked. So, of course he had to conform, though as far as we know, his preference ran towards low-relief carving and graceful contours.

English writers are wont to ascribe to George Hepplewhite the "discovery" of the shield-back chairs by which he is best known. But this was also a clear Louis XVI motive, though—as we have seen frequently throughout the development of English furniture—Hepplewhite improved on the original, of which there is a pair of excellent examples at the Metropolitan Museum. He eliminated the fluted torches which flank the "shield" and substituted for the usual Louis XVI, rather stiff, combination of short straight lines and a geometric curve, a beautiful serpentine top line, unbroken by any protruding ornament. In the Louis XVI original, the shield was the Roman model, with the torches or lictors' *fasces* seen on all ancient monuments, while George Hepplewhite's shield is the early medieval pattern worn

PLATE LXIX, a.—PEDIMENT OF PHILADELPHIA HIGHBOY ALMOST, THOUGH NOT QUITE, PERFECT ENOUGH FOR SAVERY. THE SCROLLS DO NOT INTERLACE IN THE SAVERY MANNER, BUT THE CENTRE ORNAMENT, SUPERBLY CARVED, IS MOST PROBABLY BY WILLIAM SAVERY, HIMSELF. (See page 333)

PLATE LXIX, b.—DETAIL OF THE BASE OF SAVERY LOWBOY. (PLATE LXVIII, b.) NOTE INTERLACED SCROLLS ON CENTRE DRAWER. CF. WITH SCROLL DESIGN OF LXIX, a. (See page 333)

PLATE LXX, a.—NEW ENGLAND QUEEN ANNE CHAIR WITH ROUNDED LEGS AND UPRIGHTS. c. 1720. (See page 334)

PLATE LXX, b.—NEW ENGLAND TYPE OF QUEEN ANNE CHAIR, WITH SPLAT COMING DOWN TO THE SEAT-RAIL. CF. LVI, a and b. (See page 334)

by mailed knights of the late 13th and early 14th centuries.

The shield stands well above the back-rail of the seat to which it is attached by flat S shaped or simple curves which run right into the seat rail.

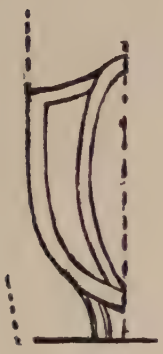


Fig. 77. English Hepplewhite

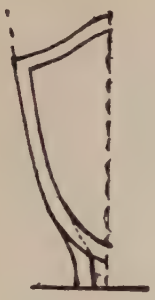


Fig. 78. French Hepplewhite

Fig. 79. American Hepplewhite

Fig. 80. Sheraton Note difference of supports.

Sheraton used a similar attachment to his shield-back chairs (see next chapter), but the curve stopped at two to three inches above the back rail and finished with a straight vertical column. (See comparative figures 77-80.)

The Hepplewhite shield-back chair, when genuine, is a very graceful piece of furniture, of which the side lines, if prolonged, would continue parallel to each other. The bottom of the shield should be like

the end of a sharp ellipse, sometimes a point. The serpentine top rail is invariably a smooth unbroken line, whereas Sheraton always placed a horizontal straight line in the middle of the top of the shield. This rule of difference between the two designers is absolute. Hepplewhite chairs were executed—again, we can say only as far as is known—in mahogany, or satinwood veneer over beech, or occasionally painted. These last were for his less important customers. In genuine painted Hepplewhite chairs, the paint at the edges is almost invariably worn off, in which case they lose some of their value, though the patina of the rubbed edges must be the first consideration of the purchaser.

The legs of Hepplewhite chairs are square and taper down to a spade foot (Plate XLV), if they are fluted or otherwise carved, or of the spider-leg type in which the taper runs right down to the ground without any foot. Not all, by any means, of Hepplewhite's chairs were of the shield-back type. He made wide oval backs with spreading pierced splats; he made most of the wheel-back chairs—again we repeat, as far as we know—with spokes on an Adam design; he even made dip-seat chairs (though there exists some doubt about this). The wheel-back chairs made for Adam should have the round, fluted, taper-

ing leg with a drooping foliage cup at the top, in the Louis XVI manner, but reversed. At any rate, it is not unpleasant, artistically, even though its original meaning has been lost. He *did not* commit the artistic barbarism of using the square leg with the wheel-back. And so we can really consider that this type of chair belongs rather to the Adam than to the Hepplewhite style.

The sideboards ascribed to Hepplewhite are almost as distinctive as his chairs. When we say "distinctive" we mean, only, that in both types of furniture we find pieces which offer evidence of inspiration, without that cut-and-dried commercialism which typified both successors and imitators. Unquestionably, Hepplewhite made sideboards for Adam, for while they bear the stamp of the fashionable architect-decorator, *e.g.*, the garland of flowers, ram's heads, urns, beads, and *paterœ*, these decorations are executed in a manner which leaves but little doubt as to their execution by Hepplewhite, while the widely chamfered corners of the top board, and the square-sectioned tapering legs are again Hepplewhite in manner, though the "batons" starting from the top —instead of the bottom—are just as essentially Adamesque, in misconception of the evolution of design.

SOME TYPICAL HEPPLEWHITE CONTOURS
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.
11.
HEPPLEWHITE, LIKE CHIPPENDALE, WAS A MASTER OF THE CURVED LINE, WHEREAS SHERATON EXCELLED IN RECTILINEAR CONTOURS. FIGS 1-11 & 14 ARE THE FAVORITE H. CHAIR-BACKS. 1. THE FAMOUS HONEYSUCKLE PATTERN 5.6.7 11. SHIELD BACKS. SHERATON SOMETIMES USED A SHIELD-BACK BUT HE ALWAYS BROKE THE UPPER CURVE. (See PLATE XII). 3. A DAINTY OVAL WITH THE H. CHARACTERISTIC PRINCE OF WALES 3 FEATHERS. THEY APPEAR AGAIN IN FIGS 11 & 14. 4. AN UNCOMMON "CRUSADER'S" SHIELD. 2 & 7 SPLAT BACKS. 5. NOTE THE CHARACTERISTIC URN. 8. DOUBLE-HOOP BACK. 9. BAR-BACK. 11. IS A CHARMING DOUBLE CHAIR-BACK SETTEE DAINTILY PAINTED & UPHOLSTERED WITH RIBBED BLUE VELVET. THE CONTOURS OF SUCH H. PIECES AS THIS HAVE NEVER BEEN SURPASSED FOR DELICACY & GRACE.
FIG 14 [RIGHT] IS OF A TYPE MORE CHARACTERISTIC OF SHERATON THAN H., BUT SH. WOULD HAVE MADE THE TOP LINES OF THE CENTRE PANEL
14.
STRAIGHT INSTEAD OF CURVED WITHOUT BRACKETS JOINING IT TO THE OUTSIDE PANELS AND AND NOT SO HIGH ABOVE THEM. NOTE ALSO THE P. OF W. FEATHERS. TYPICAL OF HEPPLEWHITE DESIGNS.
12A.
12.
BEAUTIFUL MAHOGANY SIDEBOARD WITH FERN-LEAF CARVED ON FRONT OF LEGS & H's TYPICAL "SPADE-FOOT". H's SIDEBOARDS ALWAYS HAVE CONCAVE CORNERS [FIG 12A] WHILE SHERATON'S ARE CONVEX., [SEE PLATE XII]
13.
13. CHARACTERISTIC DRESSING MIRROR OF PLEASING DESIGN. THE CONCH-SHELL INLAID WITH STAINED & SCORCHED WOODS IS A FAVORITE MOTIVE WITH HEPPLEWHITE

Sideboards which may be reasonably attributed to Hepplewhite have either a serpentine front—though these are even more likely to be the design of Shearer—or a bowed front with concave corners. (Plate XLV.) The whole feeling of Hepplewhite tends, we might say, towards concavity: concave corners, serpentine fronts (?), fluting, etc., whereas, as we shall see in a later chapter, Sheraton runs exclusively towards convexity, whether as a means of distinctiveness, or for some other reason, we know not.

Hepplewhite's favorite motives were the Prince of Wales' feathers, which he used frequently in his chair-backs, but as this again was unquestionably a political motive, to flatter George IV—as he became later,—we must not take their presence even on a Hepplewhite mode chair as a proof of his authorship. The honeysuckle and husk motives are also typical.

His knife-boxes and tea-caddies, always showing the concave corners, and enriched with fan-like marquetry designs; his fire-screens, with dainty fluted pillars and generally tripod; his finely-proportioned bedsteads with four fluted pillars are among his best productions.

At his best, Hepplewhite had the genius of design. He always showed talent, but at times—if we can accept certain so-called authenticated pieces as

his work—his taste was as bad as that of the period itself, than which little worse can be said.

Those desirous of purchasing genuine *George* Hepplewhite furniture should insist on the delivery of the bill from George Hepplewhite—not A. Hepplewhite and Son—as they would insist on having the authentic pedigree of a champion dog. Without such bill, and the careful examination of the piece to be sure that the bill has reference to the object desired, one cannot be absolutely certain of its design by George Hepplewhite. And his successors simply commercialised his name. Their work has no financial value whatsoever—as "antique" values go!

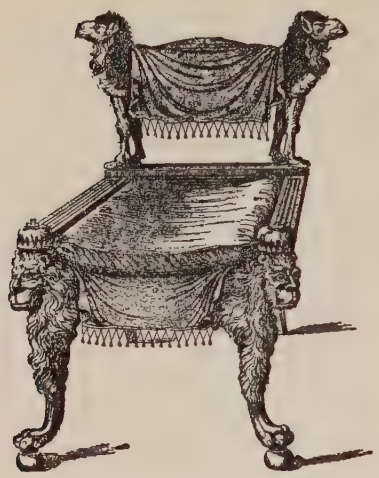
CHAPTER XVII

THOMAS SHERATON (c. 1751-1806)

While George Hepplewhite was at times a genius, but in the average, an ordinary craftsman with an innate sense of design and supreme knowledge of the details of his craft, Thomas Sheraton was that most miserable of human beings, a genius and a polemist, a genius in misunderstanding others, as well as in designing. At one moment he would be comparatively wealthy; at others, completely penniless, and at such times he exhibited his hatred of those who were better off than himself in numerous and distinctly scurrilous articles. In this he resembled Lord Byron, but Sheraton ever felt the lack of breeding and position which, of course, played no part in "Glorious Apollo's" fights with his fellow-men. Sheraton seems to have been destined to a church career, but he was first heard of in London when nearly 40 years of age, in 1790. The exact date of his birth seems to be as problematical as that of Hepplewhite.

Like Chippendale and the Hepplewhite firm, he brought out a book, entitled "The Cabinet-maker

and Upholsterer's Drawing Book," which appeared first in 1791, then again in 1793 and 1802 with additions. He also issued a succinct Cabinet Dictionary which ran into two editions in 1802 and 1803, arranged alphabetically, but generally useless, and extremely didactic as became the polemist that Sheraton never ceased to be.



Drawing Room Chair.
Design published by T. Sheraton, April 9, 1802.

Fig. 81.

Drawing Room Chair.
Design published by T. Sheraton April, 1803

Fig. 82.

More than all others, he was swept along with the popular taste of the day, however bad it might be; and as he wanted money, he catered to that taste, even though the controversialist in him forced him more than once to declare that a certain design was not

worthy of him, from which we can gather that he was not altogether discontented with his own abilities.

In short, Sheraton was a genius gone wrong, for, like George Hepplewhite, he at times designed masterpieces. At others, he committed horrors, such as those illustrated here (Figs. 81 and 82) or the set

FIG. 83.—PAGE 14 OF SHERATON'S "CABINET-MAKER AND UPHOLSTERER'S DRAWING BOOK"

of chairs made for Admiral Nelson, after Trafalgar, that is to say, one year at the most before his death. Some of his chair-backs are delightful—probably when he was in funds and satisfied with the world and himself, *e.g.*, those on page 14 of his book (Fig. 83)—but such are rare; and his books, being like those of Chippendale and Hepplewhite, simply large catalogues of what he was able to offer his clients, he was copied by almost every cabinet-maker

and chair-maker in the country, while his name was attached to their work to give it a value. Even Shearer,—who in a way was a master cabinet-maker, particularly of sideboards, of which he is said to have invented the serpentine front often attributed to George Hepplewhite—did not disdain to copy Sheraton's best designs; so we are confronted with the same problem as those which met us with regard to Chippendale, Adam and Hepplewhite. An authentic bill is the only real test and even then . . . As Sheraton is believed himself to have made only one piece,* the works attributed to him are simply executions of his designs by his contemporaries who were legion. We can be almost sure, however, that any design appearing in any of the three editions of his "Drawing-Book" was at some time or other made under his supervision or by his immediate disciples.

In his shield-back chairs he broke the serpentine cresting with a straight line occupying approximately one-half of the total width of the chair, there-

** To any logical mind there must appear a high degree of doubt as to Sheraton having really executed any pieces at all, firstly, because the skill required for the fabrication of pieces worthy to bear his name, would have required a long apprenticeship, through which we have no evidence that he ever went; secondly, because, financially embarrassed as he almost always was, he surely would have employed so high a degree of manual skill as a means of improving his impoverished condition. Yet the piece which is sometimes attributed to him, was according to the author of the attributions, made specially as a gift to friends. There is an inconsistency in this regard which it is impossible for the searcher after facts to ignore.*

by completely submerging the original shield-back motive taken from the shields carried by English armed knights at the end of the 13th and the beginning of the 14th century.

But Sheraton, as far as his chairs are concerned, is best known by his rectangular backs, generally divided again by a rising piece in the centre half the width of the chair with a quarter on either side, the centre piece serving as a sort of splat in which he frequently designed an elongated urn. Adam, Hepplewhite and Sheraton all used the urn motive, but whereas Adam drew his urns very wide and proportionately low—in a modified Roman manner, Hepplewhite used the plain, elongated urn, and Sheraton designed his more in the shape of a bottle with a narrow neck and sharp shoulder.

Sheraton employed the urn motive in almost every piece of furniture he constructed. We have seen as many as three bottle urns on one single fire-screen, the screen itself being in the shape of the typical shield. He used it as supports for the arms of his arm chairs, or just above the legs of a tripod piece, or at the pinnacle of a fire-screen.

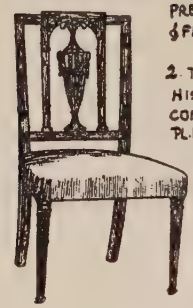
His sideboards are distinguished by the convex corner in conjunction with short rectangles on either side of the curve. (See Line Plate XLVI.)

SHERATON STYLE.

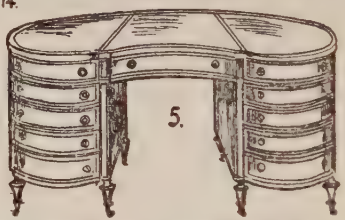
1. SHERATON USED URNS & DRAPERIES AS HIS FAVORITE MOTIVES WHEREAS HEPPLEWHITE PREFERRED FEATHERS & FLOWER-GARLANDS

3. 1. SHERATON'S TREATMENT OF THE SHIELD, WHICH HE USED VERY RARELY COMPARE TOP-RAIL WITH FIGS 5.6.7 11. PLATE XI. THE INTERRUPTED CURVE IS TYPICAL

3. TYPICAL CHAIR OF SH'S DECADENT PERIOD NOTE EMPIRE INFLUENCE IN CURVES OF ARMS & OF SLENDER REEDED LEGS THE BACK IS PIERCED & PREPARED FOR PAINTING.



2. TYPICAL SH. CHAIR OF HIS EARLY, BEST, PERIOD. COMPARE WITH SIMILAR DESIGN PL. 12. FIG 14.



5.

6. BOOK-CASE WITH CHARACTERISTIC SWAN-NECK PEDIMENT & URN, AND ITS TYPICAL GLASS-DOOR TRACERY OF THIN WOODS.

4. 5. ONE OF THOMAS SHERATON'S MOST CHARACTERISTIC INVENTIONS WAS THE "KIDNEY" DESK-TABLE IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT UNLIKE CHIPPENDALE & HEPPLEWHITE, SHERATON WAS A DESIGNER, NOT A CABINET-MAKER.

COURTESY OF ARTHUR S. VERNAY

4 SHERATON'S MOST TYPICAL SIDE-BOARD HAD CONVEX CORNERS AS OPPOSED TO H'S CONCAVE ONES, TAPERING REED LEGS, & AS EVERYTHING OF SHERATON'S DESIGN WAS OF PERFECT PROPORTIONS IT WAS THIS GREAT ARTIST'S ACUTE SENSE OF PROPORTION AND COMPOSITION WHICH MADE HIM ADD TO HIS SIDE-BOARDS THE BRASS GALLERY INDICATED HERE WHICH ADDED AN ELEMENT OF HEIGHT TO THE LONG FLAT PIECE

7. LOWER PORTION OF BOOKCASE WITH TYPICAL PANEL TRACERY & SPLAY FEET.

Whether the general convexity of Sheraton's designs grew out of his quarrelsome nature which made him do the exact opposite of what Hepplewhite did; or whether he had a real feeling for the beauty of convex curves, we shall probably never know. The fact remains, however, that the whole spirit of Sheratonesque design is convexity, whereas that of Hepplewhite, as we have seen, was concavity. We find his love of the convex curve in his typical reeded legs—which Duncan Phyfe imitated, not always successfully—in the contours of his dressing-tables and large pieces of furniture, generally, in which he frequently goes so far as to produce a three-quarter or a half-circle, outside the main contour, as a sort of niche for a short reeded column.

As sure as we can be certain of any design being by Sheraton himself, we can place the reeded leg and the bottle urn as at least in his manner.

Again, at his best moments, we find in the tracery of his bookcases or the panels of his side-boards an exquisitely designed oval inlaid in satinwood. On the side-boards these are generally of wire-like fineness, in the centre of which he placed, when necessary, a circular-based handle with a circular laurel wreath suspended from the top-center. This is one of the points by which we can tell English from

American Sheraton, for in the American pieces the handle base is another oval which does not compose well with the inlaid or main ellipse. Hepplewhite used, with perfect propriety, the ellipse-shaped handle because his inlay line was square; but Sheraton knew that the only form that could go with his flat marquetry ellipse was a circle.

Towards his later years, Sheraton fell under the inartistic impulse of the French Directoire and Empire styles, combining their boat-shaped curves with rectilinear motives, and the result was distinctly bad. Unfortunately, his designs were copied, very often extravagantly, by his contemporaries, and they grew from bad into worse. (Plate XLVII.) But some of Sheraton's own designs, like those of Chippendale, were in execrable taste, impossible to execute by the less skilled cabinet-makers no longer under the control of the great guilds.

Sheraton is also supposed to have designed painted furniture, but in such cases, he simply designed painted flowers in the centre of the satinwood uprights. In genuine satinwood furniture the veneer is hand-cut, very thin, over mahogany, for the lighter material being extremely hard and liable to shrink, would buckle the woods which were used as carcases with other veneers.

PART III

PLATE LXXI, a.—NEW YORK TYPE OF "DECORATED QUEEN ANNE" CHAIR WITH "SLIPPER" FEET. (See page 335)

PLATE LXXI, b.—PHILADELPHIA CHAIR IN CHIPPENDALE MANNER. NOTE CARVING OF TOP-RAIL AND SPLAT. (See page 335)

PLATE LXXII.—PHILADELPHIA "PIE-CRUST" TIP TABLE, WITH TYPICALLY AMERICAN INTERPRETATION OF THE "CABOCHON-AND-LEAF" MOTIVE ON THE KNEE. C. 1770. (See page 337)

CHAPTER XVIII

EARLY AMERICAN FURNITURE UP TO 1725

THE study of American furniture is necessarily of deep interest either to those who possess a long ancestry in this country, or who have made of it their permanent home. But that is a patriotic sentiment which in foundation has nothing to do with art, the application of which to furniture modes is the subject of this book. For that purpose, American furniture, like that of England, must be looked upon subjectively, putting sentiment aside, and examined in the light of another phase, governed by special conditions, of the evolution of which we have spoken on numerous previous occasions.

We say "special conditions" because the earliest American furniture was produced by the pioneer settlers of this great continent under circumstances which demanded practical utility rather than ornamental beauty. It is evident to anyone who has the slightest knowledge of the struggles of the early settlers that home-comfort, or rather beauty in the home, was of far less importance than the personal

safety of families and the material uses to which each hardly-acquired piece of furniture was to be put.

Here we are far from the luxurious palaces and mansions of Italy, France, England, and the Spanish Netherlands; far from the dominating guilds, with their apprentices, journeymen, passed-masters, and their severe rules constantly revised to meet changing conditions; far from the fashionable desire to possess only the latest styles—be they in furniture, or in clothing or in the form of the perruque—far indeed from the effeminacy which characterised a large portion of society during the latter part of the 17th and the first four decades of the 18th century even though it was more apparent than real.

Here we find ourselves in the midst of a band of gallant builders of empire and their valiant stout-hearted women, whose whole soul was set upon retaining their meagre foothold upon the soil of a new continent of vast unexplored distances. These were the primitives of America—using the word as we have used it in the first chapter of this book—the men who beheld a great vision and, in spite of all material obstacles, set out to duplicate that vision in fact. They possessed all the splendid characteristics of the primitives in every art; their sincerity, their capacity for hard work, their indifference to personal

peril, their unselfishness, and their "pre-vision" that they were but the forerunners of a great population which would one day cover an immense continent, and with the help of its unlimited resources bring order out of its aboriginal chaos.

From such men living in such surroundings, we cannot expect the airs and graces of European courts, nor even of the relatively quiescent countryside estates of old Europe. With pioneers, everything must serve its purpose, honestly, last as long as possible, be as comfortable as it can be made, and—even were it feasible—not be so "showy" as to be unfitted for a primitively simple dwelling.

But we must not lose sight of one of the sentimental sides of human nature, while we are studying the problems of the early settlers. We refer, needless to say, to that nostalgia, that dread spirit of homesickness, which assails the strong and the weak, men and women, alike, in the long evening hours when the day's work is done, and the distance from the land one has left grows greater and greater.

It was unquestionably that nostalgia which imprinted upon American furniture much of its English or Dutch aspect, for the desire to have around one objects that bring back memories of home is hard to eradicate from the hearts of men.

Nevertheless, in spite of its borrowed forms and generally rude craftsmanship, pioneer American furniture has a distinctive character of its own, and, until skilled cabinet-makers came from abroad to exercise their profession, possessed much of that great purity of line and that sincerity of endeavour which constitute the most enduring appeal of the "Primitives" in all forms of art.

Firstly, tradition in the matter of woods employed had not the weight it carried in Europe, and instead of oak or walnut, of which almost all English furniture was made up to the year 1720, the American furniture-makers employed the timbers most easily obtained, *e.g.*, elm, pine, the several maples, cedar, birch, cherry, hickory, and ash. With less knowledge of the peculiar qualities of each of these woods, their susceptibility to the attacks of the wood-beetle, and their resistance to lateral shrinking strain, than had trained European specialists, they created pieces possessing, frequently, much beauty, and worthy of the attention of any student of furniture design, not to mention the genus "Collector for collecting's sake." So out of the native woods, they came, in time, to make pieces with veneers of bird's-eye, or curly maple, and handsomely grained woods of other varieties which yield in nothing to the oyster

and burl walnuts which had such a vogue in the mother country.

But we must not infer from what has gone before that early American furniture was all of one type. Far from it—and one of the keenest delights of the collector lies in the recognition of the more or less exact provenance of the pieces he may have an opportunity to purchase. For example, furniture made in Virginia—the first colony—or in the New England colonies was, we find, strongly tinged with memories of English pieces the pioneers had known before they set forth on their great adventure. Furniture made in the districts around New Amsterdam (now New York) and in East Pennsylvania quite naturally was modeled on the Dutch styles; while most of the pieces now assigned to the Carolinas and Georgia were either made in England, or, when the original pieces were destroyed, copied directly from the models imported from the British Isles by the wealthier settlers of the Southern colonies, who, in a large number of cases, were younger sons of aristocratic houses, serving as governors, or as soldiers, or even in the church, the three land careers in which "gentlemen" could engage in those days, without "disgracing their name."

Again, while American furniture styles run gen-

erally from twenty-five to forty years behind the European prototype of each, the fact remains that fashions *were* initiated, and certain types held the popular taste for quite long periods. Of such was the Windsor chair—to which we have devoted a special chapter—which retained its vogue for a period of eighty years, from 1740-1820.

Now almost all the earliest American-made furniture, that is up to the end of the first decade of the 18th century at least, was what we might call "memory" furniture, a name which, though of our own coining, nevertheless has, for several reasons, a certain appropriateness. Firstly, its inspiration was drawn from that nostalgia, that longing for home, of which we have already spoken. Secondly, in a more material sense, its forms were due to memories of pieces seen at home, in England, or Holland, even in France, and possibly Scandinavia, before undertaking the venturous voyage to American shores.

And it is remarkable how little we, who live for years on end with our furniture, can remember of its minute details, if we are asked—away from it—to make a drawing of any particular piece. We have tried the experiment many times both on ourselves and on our students, and we do not remember a single case of absolutely accurate observation and memory.

If that be so with us whose minds are comparatively at ease, how much less can we expect the early colonists to have remembered the details of the pieces of furniture they had left behind in Europe, in the face of all the hardships and dangers, from man and beast, they had to undergo.

So we have a clear method, firstly of distinguishing American-made pieces—apart from the wood—from similar-type European pieces, most of which were either English or Dutch; secondly, of telling the class of man who made the furniture; thirdly, of distinguishing Dutch from English origins, in other words whether a piece, *e.g.*, a chair, was made in New York or Pennsylvania, or whether it was of New England provenance. Finally—but later—we have a third type, that of pieces copied as best they could by the amateur cabinet-makers—really excellent carpenters—from models actually imported from Great Britain. These copies should not be classed under the heading of "memory pieces," but the differences between the skilfully-contrived and carved original with the ingenuous copy is clearly demonstrated in the case of two particular middle 18th century chairs at the Metropolitan Museum (Plates XLVIII and XLIX). Such pieces are almost all southern. In regard to the possibility of distinguish-

ing the class of men who made certain types of "memory furniture," we must again approach the subject from a psychological standpoint. There were among the early settlers all sorts and conditions of men. Some were of a good middle class, while others were not so high in the social scale, and it is among these latter, men and women, who had "served" in great houses, before religion began its dividing work, that we shall find the closest copies of the original pieces, for the simple reason that their work consisted of caring for the furniture, and thus, many details not even noticed by its owners, were, to these "inferiors," an item of their daily routine. Cabinet-makers in the higher sense of the word—passed-masters of the guild—did not begin to come over until much later, when a genuine demand for decorative furniture began to grow up, but men soon learned to be carpenters, though at first they had no tools to work with, and saw-mills were few and far between.

Also it must not be forgotten that quite a large number of men that came over in the earliest days found the work they were called upon to do beyond their strength, their skill, or their powers. And many, in consequence, following the line of least resistance, actually became cave-dwellers, rather than try to

build houses with the few implements at their command. There must have been quite a large number of these cave-dwellers in Pennsylvania, since, in 1685, the Governor's Council had to issue an order that the caves be destroyed and filled in. New York, Massachusetts, and other states also had these cave-dwellings. Some quite wealthy families lived in this primitive fashion. Cornelis van Tienhoven, Secretary of the Province of the New Netherlands, states that the wealthy and prominent men in the New England provinces lived in caves for two reasons: firstly, to avoid wasting time in building; secondly, in order not to discourage the poorer working-classes. So it is not difficult to realise that furniture with even the slightest of decorations was unlikely to exist at all in that part of the country. It is stated by Alice Morse Earle that the famous Betty Jumel, who later in life married Aaron Burr, lived in one of these caves in her girlhood, and that was considerably later, in Rutland, Mass. These "smoky homes" —to quote the same authority—certainly existed in New England, since they are mentioned by Johnson in his "Wonder-Working Providence" in 1645.

Indian tepees, naturally, were also adapted to the requirements of the early settlers, particularly in the border and southern colonies; and Mrs. Earle

says that Abraham Lincoln even lived in such a "half-faced camp," as they were called, for some time in his youth. Then came the earliest log-cabin, the "rolled-up" house, which rarely had a floor, so again the furniture must have been of the most primitive order. These "rolled-up" houses were constructed of big logs, stood on their ends in a more or less deep trench, and were frequently built around some large tree which was cut down to the necessary height for use as a table.

But, by the beginning of the 18th century, things had improved immensely. Bricks were used and houses became more comfortable, though even then only the kitchen was warm enough to live in by day, and sleep in by night. Doors were hung on leather "hinges" and there was no time for the seasoning of lumber; therefore houses were draughty even when they belonged to the wealthier people.

Now the furniture of the first period of American history followed, usually, as we have said, at a distance of from twenty-five to forty years, the English or Dutch styles, with occasional French-type pieces.

At first the chest was used as it was in England in the 15th and early 16th centuries, as a seat, a coffer and even as a bed. We find chests made by the

earlier settlers which from the point of view of craftsmanship are naturally enough as crude as the earliest Gothic chests. But though the form of the frame is that of the 13th century coffers, the panels show a Jacobean, *i.e.*, in many cases, at least, a Dutch, influence in the frequent use of the tulip as a decorative motive, just as we find it in early Jacobean furniture in England. The chests of the Bolles collection in the Metropolitan Museum are worthy of study. They have one particular point of distinction, *viz.*, the "building" of the inset panels with several narrow strips instead of one wide board as in England, therein, perhaps, showing their early date, for at first the settlers would naturally choose small trees, cut down more easily by the axe, rather than the bigger ones.

American-made chests stand upon higher legs than most English ones, on account of the careful housewife's desire to be able to sweep underneath them more easily. We shall consistently find the same desire for a maximum of cleanliness combined with a minimum of work, in the rounding-off of corners, the filling in of other angular places as in chests of drawers enriched with moldings in the Flemish manner, and so on. Also in all the early coffers, cupboards and chests-of-drawers, the decoration is of the

"chip-" or "gouge"-carving variety (Plate L, a), until at the very end of the 17th century when the Flemish mode of mouldings became popular. In American chests, however, the Anglo-Flemish style of making the mouldings of each row of drawers of a different pattern was not often adhered to, and there again we have a point of distinction from the English prototype which is, one may safely say, constant. (Cf. Plates XXIII, b and L, b.)

The exact chronology of American furniture is difficult to fix, for the simple reason that the earlier settlers were of various classes, *viz.*, peasants, minor squires of country estates, or younger sons, and artisans from the cities. The first category had in their home life probably seen nothing but the rudest of furniture; the second two had been brought up among pieces of which the styles only seeped through slowly into the provinces and the country-side; the third had acquired, in many cases, a knowledge, not so much of cabinet-making, as of that greatest of English crafts,—joinering or carpentering. This craft is bred in the English race, and was possessed to a certain proportion by the majority of the early settlers. But the work they produced in this country was, of course, tinged by the memory of such furniture as they had known at home, and so we must rely

to a certain extent upon the chronology of the prevailing modes in England and Holland and use our own "feeling" for evolutionary processes as a secondary guide, always remembering the rule that American furniture popularly followed the great vogues in England, particularly, at a distance of approximately twenty-five years. Thus we find, first, the coffer or chest, or the Bible box (Plates L, a and LI, a), the latter generally placed on the former, unless, as in some early pieces, the Bible was placed in a big drawer under a table, or even under the seat of a chair. Then came the coffer above a drawer, the whole raised on turned legs (Plate LI, b). Then the desk with a sloping-panel top, which let down as a writing-table, and frequently had a drawer in the stand, and two supports for the writing-top (Plate LII). At the same time the sets of drawers were raised on legs to make them more convenient; at first one, then two, or three, until finally the highboy developed logically from these earlier "pieces of convenience." (Plate LIII, a.) This was accompanied in the wealthier families by a "lowboy"—or dressing-table, and sometimes by a "tallboy," which was simply one chest of drawers, placed upon another slightly larger set. We doubt if the "highboy" with its horizontal top and inverted-cup legs connected by

a "run-around" stretcher such as the example (Plate LIII, b) in the Metropolitan Museum could have been made in this country much before 1715, whereas its vogue in England was from 1689-1702.

The chairs which came into use during the last quarter of the 17th century followed a Dutch, or Anglo-Dutch, model, with wide-splayed arms and a rush-seat. Here again we find evidence of a desire to hasten the work, and, at the same time increase the comfort of the chairs. Nearly all the early ones have spindle- or "banister"-backs—which have been turned on a lathe, and then split, so that one complete spindle provided two "banisters," while the desire for comfort at the expense of decoration is demonstrated by the fact that these split spindles are placed with the *flat* side to lean against while the turned portion is only seen from behind the chair. We see this peculiarity not only in the commoner types of chairs but even in the more elaborately decorated, *e.g.*, those obviously copied either from memory—which is most likely—or from an original English model of Charles II chairs with carved crestings and front stretchers, or of transitional James II chairs with the turned stretcher, and with spindle uprights for the back. (Plate LIV, a and b.) Other chairs were made with horizontally

placed "slats," like the ladder-back type, but with the "rungs" unpierced, very crudely carved and slightly curved backwards for comfort.

Such wainscot chairs as we find follow closely the Elizabethan model, but are more comfortable, for the panelled and decorated back is "canted" instead of being "bolt upright" as in early English pieces. There is one chair of the wainscot type at the Metropolitan Museum (American Wing) which is certainly of Scandinavian design. Its top rail and arms are inspired by the great distinctive motive of all early Scandinavian art, the dragon. (Plate LV, a.) In fact, it lies very close in almost every respect to a famous Norwegian portal which Frederick Litchfield, in his "Illustrated History of Furniture" (see Fig. 85), places at the 10th or 11th century. How did this chair come to be made in America, as it undoubtedly was, if we judge from the color and cutting of the oak from which it is made? We recommend this interesting problem to archæologists rather than furniture experts, for we believe that something of interest to the history of the United States may develop from such research. The other wainscot chairs are unquestionably of English inspiration. (Plate LV, b.)

Day-beds, which were so fashionable in England

during the Restoration (1660-1689), were copied very closely by American makers, but, in most cases, the popular royal crown of the English pieces is missing and replaced by some more democratic motive, generally floral. There is one chair, however, on the third floor of the Metropolitan Museum, American Wing, which would seem to betray an interesting country-estate origin, for it substitutes for the royal crown the coronet of a marquis or a duke, not quite correctly enough, however, to say which it was meant to be. It may have been copied from an original piece brought over by a younger son, or it may be a "memory piece" seen by some retainer-craftsman who reproduced it over here.

On the same third floor there is a room of chairs undoubtedly made in New York or Pennsylvania, for all of them—and they run from Restoration types through to Chippendale—have the Dutch characteristic feature of the back splat, or even caned backs, coming down only to a bar running horizontally across the back at from two to three inches above the back rail of the seat. (Plate LVI, a.) Here, therefore, the Dutch influence to be found in New York and Pennsylvania is predominant. Except for this characteristic, there is but little homogeneity in this group, for, as stated above, we even find the Chippendale

PLATE LXXIII, a.—CHARMING DUNCAN PHYFE TABLE IN HIS BEST STYLE. COMPARE THE GRACEFUL LEGS AND PROPORTIONS OF THIS TABLE WITH THOSE OF LXXIII, b. (See page 340)

PLATE LXXIII, b.—DUNCAN PHYFE TABLE IN HIS LATER MANNER. c. 1810. (See page 340)

PLATE LXXIV, a.—ORIGINAL DUNCAN PHYFE "DIRECTOIRE" STYLE CHAIR, WITH THE LOUIS XVI LYRE. (See page 341)

PLATE LXXIV, b.—MODERN REPRODUCTION OF LXXIV, a. NOTE DIFFERENCES: IN CURVE OF BACK-AND-SEAT CURVE, IN PROPORTIONS OF LYRE, ETC. (See page 341)

cupid-bow top-rail and the squared back, distinctive of that style, in conjunction with a Flemish (Spanish) foot, a rush-seat, and widely-splayed arms—all Dutch features. (Plate LVI, b.)

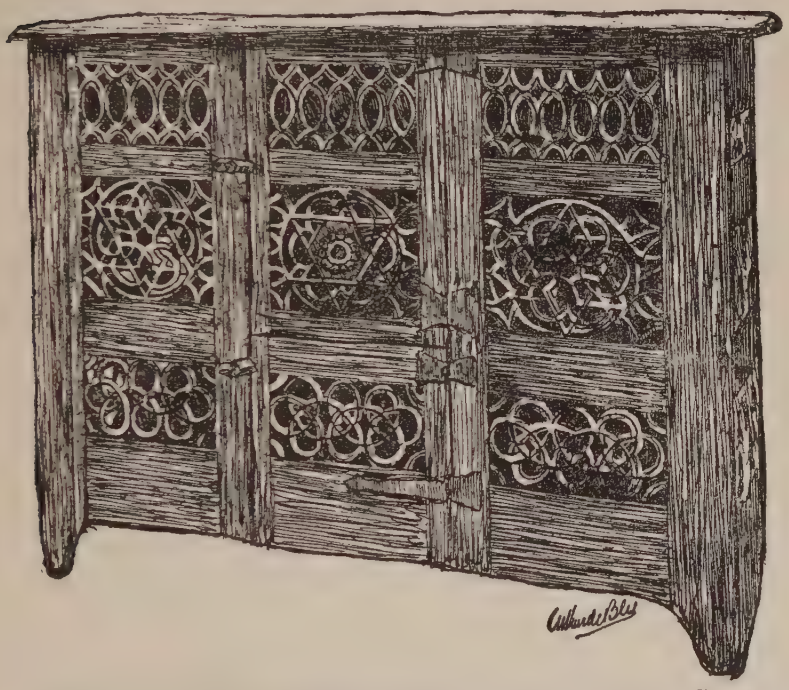


Fig. 84.—An Early English Gothic Hutch or Livery Cupboard

In regard to cupboards, American-made pieces comprise the usual English types, *viz.*, the court cupboard, the press cupboard, and the livery cupboard. We have described the difference between the first two in Chapter VIII. The livery-cupboard was a de-

scendant of the Gothic hutch (Fig. 84), and was of ruder design and workmanship than the first two, for it was a kitchen-, or pantry-piece (service cupboards). An interesting record of Henry VIIIth's time, dated 1500 A.D., conserved in the British Museum, specifies that:—"Ye cobards they be made ye facyon of livery yt is without doors." They were made by ordinary house carpenters—as distinct from cabinet-makers—in the form of three shelves, on four turned legs, with a drawer for table-linen. One section at least was fitted with hooks for hanging up the drinking-mugs and other vessels, while a ewer and a basin was also comprised in their equipment, for the washing of such cups as had been used. Such few original "livery cupboards" as are still extant are known as "bread-and-cheese" cupboards. American-made pieces of this class are rare, though there is a good example on the top-floor of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum.

Court cupboards of the Elizabethan style are also practically non-existent among American-made pieces, but we find occasionally a later version with a turned variation of the cup-and-cover motive for supports, and a crude "chip-carved" decoration on the panels of the enclosed upper portion. The two outside cupboards, in some scarce examples, are still

"refused" or laid back at an angle of 135 degrees from the centre cupboard, or of 45% from the lines of the entire front. The turned supports were almost always painted black, while the moldings around the cupboards, and, later, around the edges of the drawers of the press cupboard were painted with red lead, which has turned a curious pink color. This again is a distinctive sign of American-made early furniture. (Plate LVII, a and b.)

In addition to the English-type cupboards previously mentioned, we find, also, in the colonies of New York and Pennsylvania, a sort of Dutch two-door cupboard (*kas*), very crudely fashioned and decorated, but of deep interest from the standpoint of the influences which produced that decoration (Plate LVIII). It was obviously inspired, firstly by the heavily-bunched flower-and-fruit paintings of the Dutch 17th century school, *e.g.*, Jan van Huysum's, and, then, by the memory of those early Flemish triptych altar-pieces, of which the outside panels of the shutters were painted in all-grey tones—*grisaille*—in imitation of the still earlier low-relief statuary. We place the influences in this order for, psychologically, the subject would come first to the "artist's" mind, then the method of representing it, and we make special note of such modes of reasoning, be-

cause they are the only ones of value in furniture collecting, or indeed in the collecting of any class of old objects of art.

Coming to the first types of highboy, that is, say a plain, horizontal-topped chest-of-drawers, upon legs of the William-and-Mary type, we see once again the work of the joiner, or carpenter, rather than that of a trained cabinet-maker. And we find this in one detail, particularly, which seems to have escaped the notice of the majority of writers upon furniture, *viz.*, the rounding-off with sandpaper of the silhouette outlines of the "run-around" stretcher. The experienced cabinet-makers of Europe had taken the silhouette outlines from the Italian furniture of the 15th and 16th centuries, made at Lucca, near Florence, and so traditionally left its edges sharp. But to the carpenter, sandpaper is as Mahomet to Allah, and instinctively he uses this medium to round off the edges of every flat plank that passes through his hand. He does so even to this day.

The inverted-cup leg of American highboys of this type frequently wanders far from the original motive, of which their makers probably never had heard. (See Chapters X and XI.) In the best examples the "cup" is well designed but is "finished" by a small half-round beading, which is out of place

though it is, occasionally, found in English pieces.

Some exquisite effects of panelling, by juxtaposing beautifully-grained veneers of curly maple and bird's-eye maple were obtained by these clever craftsmen, though from the point of view of the purist in cabinet-making, they spoilt the effect by bordering the edges of such charming work with a narrow strip of painted wood. (See Plate LIX.) There must have been an important technical reason for this edging, if one can judge from the condition of the veneer in some of the furniture at the Metropolitan Museum. It would seem that the border was intended to hold down the edges of the thin veneer, which, in such pieces, are held under it by a shallow flange. This seems the more likely that in surfaces so treated the veneers have not moved—with rare exceptions—where the edging lies, whereas in the centre or two centre joints where there is no edging, the veneers have "bubbled" away from the carcase wood. The exceptions, referred to above, would also tend to corroborate this theory, for in the pieces in question, where the veneer has sprung away from its surface it has done so in an absolutely straight line, as though it were still held down partially, instead of in the usual "wavy" manner. And finally, the quasi-unanimity of this treatment in early

veneered American furniture would seem to indicate a definite reason for its adoption.

The tables of those earlier days of the colonies once more followed along English lines, *e.g.*, trestle tables, mostly very crude and very tall and narrow (Plate LX, a), gate-leg tables on a trestle foot or provided with a turned stretcher, and the so-called "butterfly" tables, which, instead of a gate-leg proper, had a ham-shaped flat board which upheld the hanging portions of the table. (Plate LX, b.) The main idea was to make these tables as large as necessary, and convenient as possible, when in use, and then to close them up so as to occupy a minimum of space against the wall between meals. Gate-leg and "butterfly" tables were made in all shapes, square and oblong, circular and oval. But one and all were rounded off at the edge with sandpaper, and generally painted.

The large gate-leg table illustrated on Plate LXI offers a perfect object lesson in the logical wear and tear of an authentic piece. As the table is painted with the usual pale red, one can see very clearly how it has been used. There is no wear, or rubbing-off of the paint, at places where there would not be normally any placing of the feet. Such points are important to the purchaser, we repeat, for it is in errors on

such points as these that makers of spurious furniture betray themselves. But, as the legal profession puts it, it would not be to the public interest, here meaning the interest of collectors, to explain more fully the mistakes which the faker almost invariably makes, and which can always be discovered if logical deduction and thought are not smothered by the desire to possess a certain piece, "right or wrong."

FIG. 85.—A FAMOUS NORWEGIAN PORTAL.

From "Illustrated History of Furniture," by Frederick Litchfield, London, 1892. (See page 311)

CHAPTER XIX

THE WINDSOR CHAIR

THERE is, says Mr. Arthur Hayden, in "Cottage and Farmhouse Furniture," a story, "*current in the United States*," that King George III, the "Farmer King," having seen a chair of the type we call "Windsor" in a farmhouse near the castle, became so enamored of its "beauty" that he promptly brought it to notice and made it the fashion. Unfortunately, this story does not ring with "the true note of jade" in the words of a long-bygone Chinese philosopher. The Farmer King did not ascend the throne until 1760, at 22 years of age, whereas the *American* Windsor chair was a well-executed, almost "fine," piece of furniture in 1740, when its popularity began, while certainly cruder pieces, that is to say, those not yet fully developed, had been made as early as 1704.

There is little doubt, if quality of workmanship be any criterion, that the earliest *American* Windsors had the loop-back, or horse-shoe back, or some other of the curved-top backs, and that the straight line

tops, such as the comb-backs, were a later stage in their evolution.

Now the earliest Windsor chairs of English make were those which combined a straight-top "comb-back" with an unshaped seat into which were let, at a fairly rakish angle, four plain undecorated sticks not connected by a stretcher, and if Mr. Hayden's contention, that Chippendale designed the first straight-top rail in English furniture in 1768, be intended to refer to the 18th century,* it follows that these chairs could not have been made much prior to about 1770.

The "Oliver Goldsmith" chair in the Victoria and Albert Museum, generally accepted as an English piece, does not appear to us to be English at all, with its dainty spindles, its well-cut saddle seat, and its widely-splayed, well-turned legs, of which the upper ends are attached well inside the outer rim of the seat. (Plate LXII, b.) In *English* straight-leg Windsors—almost all had the cabriole leg—these turned legs were attached close to the corners of the seat, with only a very slight "rake," making the type much stockier than the graceful American model (Plate LXIII, a and b). And so we wonder

* *There were, of course, straight top rails in a number of wainscot chairs of late Elizabethan and Jacobean days.*

whether some colonial admirer of the author of "She Stoops to Conquer" did not send this chair to Goldsmith as a present. In this connection it may be worthy of mention that Goldsmith made a special legacy of this chair to his doctor, when he died in 1774. Now this looks as though it had in his eyes some peculiar value, else why should he have left to a dear personal friend, apparently as an interesting legacy, a simple cottage- or tavern-chair, of no value whatsoever if it were an English piece, in which case, moreover, it could only have been in his possession for five or six years, at the most.

Apart from Mr. Hayden's story—at a long second-hand—we can find no definite documentary evidence, worth considering, accounting for the origin of the name, but we think that a more logical explanation of the origin of this famous name might be found in the "Mother of Cities," as Windsor, *Connecticut*, has been called, founded in 1633 by Captain William Jones of the Plymouth Colony. The family name of the Earls of Plymouth is *de Windsor!* And—*en passant*—Oliver was a familiar name in Windsor, Connecticut, the birthplace of Oliver Walcott and Oliver Ellsworth.

And so we venture here to suggest a new theory, *viz.*, that the English "Windsor" chair was derived

from the American type instead of the latter being a copy of the former. By the middle of the 18th century there was a large fleet of American vessels on the seas, and it is more than probable that some home-returning, or visiting, colonist took back with him one of the chairs which were so popular in America. The English tried their hand at it, but never brought it to the same degree of perfection, because in England, at that time, artistic perception was not at its highest flow, nor over-inclined to simplicity (*vide* Chippendale and his school), and also because it was less suitable for "the stately homes of England" than for the fine, but more plainly-furnished, mansions of the wealthier colonists of America.

But spindle chairs had long been popular in the New England colonies, as witness the "Carver" chair, with its turned or whittled spindle framework and its slat-back—which again may have suggested the English ladder-back, which it antedated considerably. This type of chair (Plate LXII, a) was named after Captain John Carver, one of the Pilgrim Fathers, and first governor of Plymouth Colony, who died in 1621. It was probably a descendant of the old Tudor "Varangian" chairs.

The "Carver" chair had a long lease of life, remaining in favor from 1650-1700, according to

American historians, though it is difficult to account for the hiatus between 1621 and 1650!

As for the rakishly-set legs of the American Windsor chair, we find them in old Saxon furniture in England, but whereas the simplicity of the model would appeal to the early "exiles," it is hard to believe that English makers would go back to it, in so crude a form, after centuries of more decorative and entirely different styles, without tangible proof of its popularity elsewhere.

In England, the Windsor chair had a brief but hectic career, at the coffee-houses and tea-gardens, at Ranelagh and Vauxhall—before it fell from grace to become simply a tavern or farmhouse seat—which led to its following the prevailing mode to a certain degree, but it always remained stiff and ungraceful even at its best. These English chairs developed a feature which was never used in America, *viz.*, that of a splat,—sometimes two or more—either in the centre or interspersed between the spindles, a style which has the appearance of the effort of an improver to better an original, rather than an original itself.

Now while the English type, at its best, was never graceful and degenerated steadily, the American Windsor chair developed into a charming object of furniture, with its widely-splayed, turned, legs,

its shaped seats, and—*circa* 1790—its well-cut scrolls at arm-ends, and the ends of the cresting, in comb-back types. Its long, slender spindles were also much daintier than the clumsily-turned ones of its English prototype (Plate LXIV, b), and again the variety of its design was not only most ingenious, but also tends to show the importance in American furniture modes of the Windsor chair. There were, of course, arm-chairs and side chairs; and each of these was made in the comb-back—a very popular style—the fan-back, loop-back, and hoop-back models (Plate LXIV, a and c), and others less common.

Those made for the wealthier people are cleverly carved in the arm and cresting scrolls, while the commoner chairs were left uncarved, save that in practically all of them the seat is shaped.

A well-known type, of which there is a good specimen at the Metropolitan Museum, was the writing-arm Windsor. On the right-hand side—probably some were made on the left, for left-handed writers, which is a point collectors should bear in mind—was a sort of large ham-shaped slab of wood with a drawer beneath it, for the writing materials. (Plate LXV.) It is said that Thomas Jefferson sat in such a chair to draft his Declaration of Independence. This one had a revolving seat!

The American Windsor chair was made of oak, as well as of the cheaper woods—the usual type—for the carving of even the richer examples was meagre and shallow.

Let the collector remember that the widely-raked leg, with the "H" stretcher, and the long, graceful spindles are the distinctive marks of the American Windsor. The English kind, which has little intrinsic or financial value, has much straighter legs, which are placed right at the corners, with the spindles and stretchers much heavier, and more coarsely turned, and, as a rule, it followed the British mode of a central splat. American Windsor chairs were always painted, or stained and varnished. We can often tell by the turning of the stretcher where the chair was made, for there was one kind advertised as "Philadelphia-made Windsor chairs," which have a clearly Dutch type of wood-turning, which is characterised by a pair of heavy bulbs in the centre, divided by a turned disk. These chairs are not as well proportioned as those made in other of the colonies, or states, as they became, long before the Windsor chair passed from popular favor. The Windsor chair with cabriole legs was never made in America, though numbers were produced in England in the third quarter of the 18th century.

CHAPTER XX

AMERICAN FURNITURE FROM 1725 TO THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

In this period of early American life, the furniture which adorned the homes of the more successful colonists took on a new aspect altogether. Instead of the rough utilitarian furniture of the first days, we find finely-made pieces in all the styles in vogue in the Old Country. But still the rule about dating a piece at about 25 years later than the height of its vogue in England holds good.

However, a new class seems to have emigrated to the Colonies about this time, for we find such men as John Goddard of Newport, Savery of Philadelphia, John Brinner of London, who settled in New York, Minshull, carver, gilder and a worker along many other lines, of London, also in New York, who were all master-craftsmen.

It might be well, here, to furnish a short chronological table of the political events in Europe and America which had their influence on the development of furniture styles.

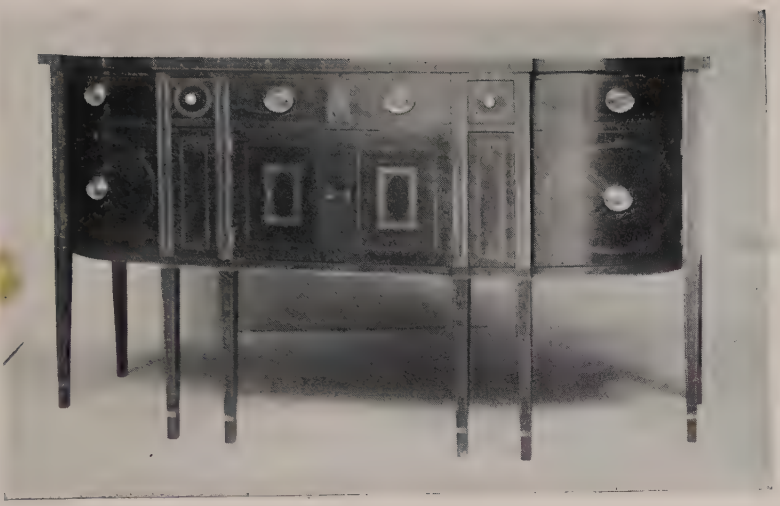


PLATE LXXV, a.—SHERATONESQUE AMERICAN SIDE-BOARD. NOTE THE DOUBLE LEGS IN FRONT. (See page 347)

PLATE LXXV, b.—AMERICAN SIDE-BOARD IN THE HEPPLEWHITE SHEARER STYLE. NOTE RECTANGULAR MARQUETRY LINE WITH FAN CORNERS (See page 348)

PLATE LXXVI, a.—AMERICAN SHERATON CHAIR WITH FULLY ENCLOSED SPLAT BACK, OF WHICH THE FRAME PROJECTS ABOVE TOP-RAIL. NOTE PIERCED URN. (See page 349)

PLATE LXXVI, b.—AMERICAN SHERATONESQUE CHAIR, WITH CENTRE PANEL OF TOP PROJECTING BUT WITHOUT REASON AS IN LXXVI, a. NOTE ALSO THE THREE URN-SHAPED SPLATS. (See page 349)

The most important of these were:

1565. Rise of the Puritans in England.
1584. Sir Walter Raleigh makes first attempt to create settlements in Pennsylvania and the Carolinas. Neither were successful.
1607. First real settlement in Virginia.
1613. Block spends winter in the Hudson and began the construction of the City of New Amsterdam.
1620. Pilgrim Fathers land at Plymouth Rock after crossing in the "Mayflower."
1620-1640. Arrival of many colonists, only a small percentage of whom were Puritans, the others leaving England to avoid taxation.
1634. Maryland is colonised by aristocratic families, and, later, during the Commonwealth, by numbers of Royalists who would not accept the régime of the "Regicides."
1638. Colony of New Haven is founded.
1643. Union of New England Colonies against the French, Dutch and Indians, for defensive purposes.
1664. New Amsterdam taken from the Dutch and renamed New York.
1681. Grant of land to William Penn for the founding of Pennsylvania.
1763. Cession of Canada to Great Britain.
1773. "Boston Tea-Party" riots against the Stamp Act.
1775. Beginning of the Revolution.
1776. Signature of the Declaration of Independence.
1783. Independence of the United States of America acknowledged by Great Britain.

With this second epoch in American mobiliary arts, came in a closer adherence to the Old World models, beginning with the style of Queen Anne, and continuing through those of the early Georges and

Chippendale. The highboy, which we saw as popular at the beginning of the 18th century, with its flat horizontal top, gave place to another type, with a gracefully-cut broken or swan-neck pediment, while the rigid stand with four legs at the front and two—and sometimes four—at the back, held together by a run-around stretcher, now took on the more facile curves of the Anglo-Dutch cabriole leg. A highboy in the Metropolitan has this type of pediment combined with a set of charmingly designed and executed spider legs, with a plain "club-foot" in the Queen Anne manner. (Plate LXVI, a.)

Most of the remainder of this piece is in the "Decorated Queen Anne" style, with its gilded shells, while the fine rectangular marquetry work of the panels betrays the hand of some master-craftsman of the late 18th century who knew the designs of Thomas Sheraton. American-made pieces of this class have handsomer veneers than English ones, and in some cases were carried to a very high degree of finish throughout. We also find lowboys and chairs in this group, and even a few japanned and lacquered pieces executed by British craftsmen who had learned the art, such as it had existed in Great Britain from the time of Charles II. (Plate LXVI, b.)

Another model of Queen Anne furniture carried

out in a much higher degree of perfection in America than in Europe was the so-called "block-front" cabinet or cupboard or desk. The greatest master of this class of furniture was John Goddard of Newport, Rhode Island, who was closely followed by John Townsend and others in that district. We do not think there can be any doubt of the attribution of the big "two-decker" cupboard on the second floor of the American Wing to Goddard himself, for the piece is quite evidently the work of a master (*Frontispiece*), with its beautifully carved "shells" at the summits of the "blockings," and its perfection of finish in every detail. The block-front pieces were made with the two outside portions convexly carved, while the centre piece is a replica of the design, but concave. The finish of the interior of the large cupboard attributed to John Goddard is as "letter-perfect" as that of any piece made by any skilled cabinet-maker, in England or France. An interesting comparison may be made by the student, between this piece and the other block-front pieces on this floor. They will see once again how far the Master, in furniture, as in all other arts, was ahead of the copyist even though the latter be the Master's direct disciple. The desks attributed to Taylor, Townsend, and other Rhode Island makers (Plate LXVII, a)

are immeasurably below the standard set by Goddard, not only in the carving of the shells, but in the contours of the "blocks" and in the design and finish of the whole piece.

There is another type of block-front furniture, which is of Dutch extraction, *viz.*, that of which the blocks are also bulged (*bombé*) in a strong curve, a characteristic of Dutch furniture, which again found its original in the strongly curved Venetian adaptations of the French rococo style. One piece has the lower portion made up in this manner, while the upper portion is built in the architectural style connected in England with the name of William Kent. (Plate LXVII, b.) One peculiarity of American pieces of this period is that they were nearly all made in two sections, upper and lower, each of which is provided with sturdy brass handles of the barrel variety, set upon large base plates, also of an English model, that of the conventionalised eagle of Modena-Este of which we spoke in Chapter VIII.

The reason for this addition of handles, lay in the necessity of moving these large pieces through low doors, and the difficulty of handling the big flat sides of the upper and lower section any other way than with handles. In such pieces as have only

handles on the upper section, it will be found that the lower piece, by its shape or carving was not difficult to lift without the assistance of handles. Again, where there are no side handles at all on either portion, we may take it for granted that such pieces were made for the larger, more sumptuous, mansions, with higher rooms and doorways.

The next class of furniture which has interest for us is that made in Philadelphia, by William Savery and his followers. They are no longer Anglo-Dutch in form, but are an adaptation of the French rococo as produced by the Chippendale school. These pieces are easy to recognise, by their strong cabriole legs with ball-and-claw feet, their richly scrolled pediments, and the applied rococo carving of the panel below the pediment of highboys, and the centre part of the base, both in high- and lowboys. (Plates LXVIII and LXIX.) The large size of the drawer handle and keyhole plates are typical; always, or almost invariably so, in the form of the spread-eagle referred to above. The key-plates and handle plates are of the same size throughout, and are not always felicitously proportioned. They cover too much of the wood surface. The highboys are in every way rather clumsily proportioned. The pediment is invariably too heavy for the body, and the

legs are stocky and short, but in workmanship they are excellent, and well finished throughout.

Here, again, it is comparatively easy for the observant to distinguish between the work of the master, William Savery, and that of unknown disciples of his "Philadelphia School." The quality of the carving of the applied scroll-work on the decorative panels is the criterion by which we must judge, and following that the finish of the entire piece. The Metropolitan Museum has some splendid pieces, modestly styled "Philadelphia" but which are unquestionably products of Savery's own workshop, while mingled with them are others, particularly one highboy and one lowboy in the main room of the second floor, which could never be classed as other than school-pieces. But, at first glance, they all seem to have the same provenance, so closely does the whole school keep to the master's general design.

The chairs of this period are of several types, from the Queen Anne (Plate LXX, a and b) to those of the many Chippendale-manner varieties. The American-made Queen Anne style chairs are, in some cases, almost indistinguishable from their English prototypes—in these the Dutch horizontal bar is missing—for we find almost similar uprights and arms, with a fiddle-back, unpierced splat, and un-

adorned cabriole legs with the plainest of Dutch club-feet. A slight difference may be noticed in the narrower "dip" of the top-cresting above the centre splat, or the "dip" in that centre itself will be seen to be deeper than in English chairs of the same model. Also in American-made chairs there is usually a thicker pad between the club-foot itself and the ground. But even this rule is not by any means universal. Gradually, a distinctive point of difference did appear, in the deformation of the rounded club-foot into a pointed version. (Plate LXXI, a.) This is never found in English pieces. Then, again, at other times the foot was divided into three sections, obviously inspired by the old Spanish or Flemish foot, and frequently we find another typically American feature in the "clothing," as one might say, of the foot and the lower portion of the leg in a sort of shoe, slightly larger than the shaft of the leg proper.

The ball-and-claw foot, which did not appear in England until 1714, also is found in American pieces of 1740 or thereabouts, and again we are able to see where the trained cabinet-maker was at work, and where the simple joiner. The ball-and-claw of the former are skilfully carved with the claws holding the ball tightly—which is sometimes, however, a trifle flattened, save in Philadelphia furniture—or

at least give as good an imitation of the Buddhist Chinese dragon-claw-and-globe as their makers were capable of executing. (Plate LXXI, b.) The work of the simpler joiners is to be seen in the elimination of such elaborate carving, in favor of a plain swelling of the foot at the end,—notably in the legs of tripod and tip-tables.

In a room on the second floor of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum, taken from "Marmion," King George County, Virginia, originally the estate of William Fitzhugh, we can see what occurred probably in very numerous cases, where individual pieces of a set of chairs, having been destroyed or lost, were replaced by the nearest carpenter. It is all the more comprehensible, in this particular instance, because "Marmion" lay miles from any great centre of population and therefore industry, and was especially far from Philadelphia whence came the original set. The estate lies in the wilds of the peninsula formed by the junction of the Potomac and Rappahannock rivers, and a glance at the map of this district even today will demonstrate the necessity of having missing pieces repaired or replaced by the nearest worker in wood. We can see at once the difference between the honest, if not quite successful, copy, and the originals, in the lack

of even an attempt to imitate the details executed by the brilliant Philadelphia masters; the copies simply follow as closely as possible the general contours of the piece, especially as regards the back contour and the decorative splat. (Plate XLIX.)

Tables of the last years of the Colonies, as such, were mostly designed in the Chippendale manner, some closer to, some naturally further away from, the drawings of the English master. The Philadelphia-made tables are indeed the closest of any furniture made by William Savery and his group to the famous English carver and designer. They were of the pie-crust type, with rococo or scrolled borders, or, at times, scalloped or gadrooned (Plate LXXII), and frequently we find the characteristic Chippendale fret-work gallery—made of three-ply wood—on round tripod tables, or on others of varying shapes with marble or composition tops.

CHAPTER XXI

AMERICAN FURNITURE, 1776-1840

In the preceding three chapters, we have adopted the grouping of American-made furniture, as adopted by the authorities of the American Wing of the Metropolitan Museum, for the simple reason that that great institution, with the help of munificent gifts. *e.g.*, the Russell Sage gift of the Bolles Collection, and its own growing purchase funds, has, we may safely say, gathered together a more nearly complete collection of all types and period styles than is to be found anywhere else in the world. Furthermore, the curators of this wing are specialists, who have, by the scientific arrangement of their possessions, earned the profound gratitude of all students of this particular branch of the art or craft of furniture-making, a subject very difficult to study adequately elsewhere.

Therefore, we shall continue to follow the lead of the Metropolitan, and describe, with such remarks as we may find necessary for the enlightenment of

the student, the later pieces grouped together on the first floor of the American Wing, as being representative of their types.

We find ourselves here right in the midst of the neo-classic style of France, as interpreted by the British designers, Adam, Hepplewhite, Shearer, and Sheraton, with such modifications as American cabinet-makers—and there were plenty of such men in America, now that the traffic between the two countries had become a regular thing—saw fit to introduce into their designs.

By this time, all the books published by Chippendale, Adam, Carter, Hepplewhite and those of the later men, were thoroughly well known in America, and the designs found therein were as extensively copied and adapted in this country as they were in England. Thus we find such men as Duncan Phyfe, a hard-headed, hard-working Scot, who landed on American soil in 1784, and by the middle of the last decade of that marvelous 18th century was well established in New York, with an ever-increasing reputation.

It seems to us that there is no rhyme nor reason in denying that Duncan Phyfe was first and foremost an adapter of Sheratonesque designs, and that as the work of his master—in the wider sense of the

word—degenerated into that of the hybrid Anglo-Empire style, so did that of Phyfe fall into an Americanized version of that ugliest of French styles.

In some of his earlier pieces, Phyfe exhibits not only a technical mastery of his craft, but also a fine taste in curves, particularly in those typical sweeping legs of some smaller tables (Plate LXXIII, a and b), and in an occasional chair or settee. But, while admitting that Duncan Phyfe was a highly skilled artisan, he was less frequently an artist, in that he lowered the standard of beauty in his work by such errors of taste as the gradually spreading ends of his reeding, as in the settee which used to be on the left-hand side of the room as one enters it from the stairs. On the settee exactly opposite to this one, across the room, his employment of certain emblems is too eclectic to be truly artistic, *e.g.*, the sheaf of thunderbolts tied together with a ribbon! Each are typical emblems in their rightful place, but united they are as foolish as the columns of the "Mihrab" (prayer arch) in a late Ghiordes rug standing precariously upon a flower or vase of flowers. Nor do we like the multiple, unrestrained, and meaningless curves to be seen in the arms of this settee any better. Again, from the standpoint of art, or æsthetics—if you pre-

fer that term—can we consider any man a great artist or even craftsman, who will use the "crossed-lyre" motive, or designed the legs and supporting columns of the large centre table in this room. A small table supported on a superbly-carved spread-eagle shows that, like Sheraton, Phyfe had his moments of genius, but we fear, from such study as we have been able to make of his work at the exhibition at the Metropolitan some years ago and of the pieces attributed to him in the American Wing, that his worth has been considerably over-rated at the expense of better men. We have the less compunction in making this statement in that he was a British emigrant, and not an American-born cabinet-maker. Now if from 1795-c.1817 when he followed closely the lines set by Sheraton in his better days, he made such poorly-designed, if excellently-made, pieces, how can we approve of his later models, say from 1818 to 1830, when even the fighter Sheraton had 25 years before been forced to transform his style to suit the growing demand for French Directoire or Empire modes. (Plate LXXIV, a and b.)

Sheraton, as we have seen, protested against this trend, but published drawings displaying an atrocity of taste such as no great cabinet-maker had ever conceived before, and we are glad to say that Duncan

Phyfe never followed the lead of the English master into such depths as the awful Nelson chairs—and many others equally bad. But we cannot look with pleasure upon those Phyfe chairs and footstools which are carved with dogs' legs as far as half-way up the leg of the stool, nor upon those chairs with the brass dogs' paws, and the back curves moving in two different planes at once. It is likely that the taste of the day called for such objects, but the greatest of *craftsmen* only becomes a great *artist* when he can build up a taste for his own designs on the basis of their inherent beauty, instead of catering to a taste that any true artist could not help knowing to be meretricious.

Sheraton is said to have despised himself for debasing his own ideals to the level of a misled public, for pot-boiling purposes, but he did it, nevertheless, and in consequence we find that very little is known of his life, or even work, in spite of the late date at which he lived. He was, to the artist and writer of his day, but an obscure designer of furniture, worthy, in their eyes, of but little more attention than any one of the thousands of designers employed today in the factories at Grand Rapids. For the same reason we fail to be able to arouse any real enthusiasm in our minds about Duncan Phyfe.

John Goddard of Newport was both a greater artist and a greater craftsman, as also was William Savery of Philadelphia.

Taken all in all, this final period in furniture styles, as such, was a decadent period, even at its best, not only here but also in England, for pride of workmanship was predominant in the minds of the craftsmen. At its worst it was a period of degradation—as that word is explained in an early chapter of this book—for then even pride of workmanship yielded the field to a desire for riches, to be as speedily gained as possible, and an overwhelming desire for fame, which is a form of coveting which rarely achieves its aim.

It is worthy of note that it is in the advertisements of English cabinet-makers imported from abroad, that one finds the most flagrant evidences of a desire to exploit to the full the new "Land of Opportunity," as witness, among many other examples, the advertisement published by "John Taylor, Upholsterer and House-Broker from London" as he styles himself in the New York "Gazette" of March 31, 1796. The advertisement is reproduced at length in "The American Wing" handbook of the Metropolitan Museum, page 124, and is deserving of perusal by those interested in the question of

American antiques. From the text of Taylor's announcement it is not difficult to see that this man was more interested in making money than in specialising in any branch of home decoration, since he tells us that, in addition to buying and selling an enormous list of articles from beds and tables and chairs of all types and styles to saucepans and "all manner of chamber, parlor, and kitchen furniture too tedious to mention," he will conduct the same operations in regard to plantations, negroes, estates, and *ALL* manner of merchandise, closing his notice with the line—"Funerals decently performed"!

Now "decadence" in English furniture had taken the same form as that which had destroyed the pristine value of painting in Italy, *viz.*, that of eclecticism, the employment of what were considered to be the best features of a number of schools or types in conjunction with each other. Unfortunately such "best features" rarely combine well into a homogeneous mass, for some detail or details is, or are, almost certain to assume exaggerated relief.

So it was in American furniture, even more so than in English, for fashions changed so quickly in the Mother Country, during those troublous times of the French Revolution and the establishment of the Directoire, Consulate and finally Empire, and the

American Revolution, and Declaration of Independence, that frequently a new style would have been adopted in Europe, before its predecessor had even had time to commence its career in American homes. Thus a detail of the new style in England or France would penetrate into America, and "join-up" with an earlier style, before the type it came from was even represented in this land.

Yet no one will quarrel with my statement that many finely executed pieces of furniture were made in America during the "Adam-Hepplewhite-Sheraton" vogue, before the heavy Empire style became the gateway to the pit of oblivion, with its suicidal competition between makers and their lighthearted undertaking of work beyond their powers of execution.

There is one piece of furniture taken from a house still standing, says "The American Wing," at 915 East Pratt Street, Baltimore, which is Sheratonesque in contour, but comprises a true innovation in the form of a beautifully-designed stretcher in the shape of the ellipses and ovals of the best Sheraton design. This is new, for the English Sheraton sideboards have no stretchers. The maker of this particular piece, whoever he may have been, was an unquestionable "master of the curve," a title errone-

ously given, in our opinion, to Duncan Phyfe, by one writer on furniture.

We wish it were possible to discover who this maker was—it should not be very difficult—for he was certainly an American, either deliberately rejecting English standards for political reasons, or seeing an improvement on the Sheraton sideboard manner in the addition of such a stretcher. With the single exception of the large cupboard-writing-desk by John Goddard on the floor above, we know of no piece of American-made furniture as worthy of mention as this stretchered sideboard.

There are, it is true, certain displeasing details in the inlay line of the drawers, the ellipses of which are too flat and too round at the ends, while the ellipse of the middle drawer is too long for its depth, and its drawing, in the lower portion, faulty. But these are minor points, and may have been deliberate deviations from the traditional. In any event, they are completely submerged under the superb artistry of that added stretcher. We repeat, here is a man whose work and name are worthy of research, for it is rare indeed to see an adaptation of a popular style as successfully enhanced as is this Baltimore sideboard. There is a very slight possibility that it may have been suggested by M. de Saint-Menin, a French

artist, who enjoyed great popularity in Baltimore at that time, but we have our doubts about it, for the lines of the stretcher are not French in any way whatsoever. They are Sheraton at his best, but employed successfully in a manner that the Englishman never used at all.

In the large room on this first floor are two sideboards, one with the characteristic concave ends of the Hepplewhite manner, the other with the equally typical Sheratonesque convex corners. (Plate LXXV, a.) Taking the former first, we see the fine marquetry line following the rectangular contour of the drawer and cupboard door themselves. It has oval handle-plates which are quite in keeping with this rectilinear arrangement. The veneering round the thickness of the top board is characteristically American-made, for the makers in this country paid less attention to the perfect matching of contiguous pieces of veneer than did the good men abroad. Let us also note as a typical feature of the American piece the insertion, generally at the top, just underneath the top board, of a sort of reproduction of the American coat-of-arms, but with only the stripes, set alternately in light and dark woods, in a vertical direction. The whole device is about square. Hepplewhite's fan-shaped design and his conch-shell also

frequently appear in pieces of his style made in the States. The fan design, made as in England with woods shaded by scorching, is found in the angles of the inlay line, while the conch-shell either occupies the centre of a panel or of the top of a sideboard or table, which latter is the more usual. (Plate LXXV, b.)

The Sheraton-type sideboard is a more finely finished piece as far as its veneering goes, but unfortunately is apt to shock the eye by the use of elliptical handle plates—of the Hepplewhite style—in conjunction with an elliptical inlay line, or a circular one. Sheraton found that the only form of handle that would compose well with his ellipses was a circular wreath—generally a laurel wreath—hanging from a point at the summit of a circular base-plate.

The chairs on this floor are also either in the Hepplewhite or the Sheraton manner. In regard to the former we have gone into the differences between the American-made article and the English ones in the chapter on George Hepplewhite, but to make it still clearer, we refer the reader to the diagrams on page 281.

As regards the Sheraton manner chairs, we again offer illustrations to clarify a vital point of diver-

sion from the prototype. This, in conjunction with the popular liking for black-painted furniture, is the most important difference: the treatment of the cresting of the rectilinear-backed chairs. In the English Sheraton type piece, we have the centre portion occupying one-half of the width of the chair, with a quarter on either side. (Plate LXXVI, a.) In such chairs the projecting part of the top rail is simply the top of this centre "splat," whereas, in the majority of American-made Sheraton type chairs, there is no connection between the cresting projection and the uprights of the back. We say "majority" because some chairs (Plate LXXVI, b) offer a good example of the adapter who did *not* fail to understand the meaning of the original. From 1790 onward, we constantly find the American eagle or coat-of-arms inlaid into the veneer of late pieces.

After 1818, American furniture of all classes, including that of Duncan Phyfe, underwent an almost complete degradation, under the influence of the French Empire style. The furniture produced at this formative period in the nation's history was called American Empire, surely a curious name to obtain a vogue in a new republic founded after so much misery and difficulty. The much-better name of "Jeffersonian" has been suggested for it, and it

appears to us that that name should have the right of way over all others, for Thomas Jefferson not only typified the new democratic spirit of America, but was himself somewhat of an architect and an unquestioned leader in all branches of intellectual pursuits, particularly artistic. Furthermore, although Jefferson was naturally a great admirer of the country which had helped so much to found his own, his independence of thought forbade him from accepting lock, stock, and barrel, the art products of France as she offered them to all and sundry. England on the other hand followed the artistic lead of the Empire very closely, a curious contradiction to the fervent hatred professed by all classes in England towards Napoleon.

It is to be feared that the name "Jeffersonian," precisely because it *is* so logically applied to American furniture of the period under review, will never be adopted universally. "American Empire" will doubtless continue to hold the field, just as the originally ironic term "Gothic" has held its own against the far more sensible names of "Pointed" or "Ogival," both of which have a truer significance.

From 1810 to 1820, American furniture makers had as much mahogany at their disposal as they required, and always in such a case—*vide* that of

oak in mediæval England—carving once more came into its own, at the expense of inlay-work and veneering forms of decoration. This is the era of pine cone finials on four-poster bedsteads—minus the tester—of carved columns and acanthus leaves, while the thin brass ornaments in vogue in France were the insidious wedge by means of which the style of the *Directoire* and Empire designers, such as Percier and Fontaine, penetrated into America. American Empire furniture is heavy and clumsy, with few redeeming features if regarded simply as furniture, not as "American antiques." Its lines are as bad as those of the French Empire style, itself hybrid and eclectic, with Greek, Egyptian, Roman, and Pompeian elements, all combined. American furniture, as we say, went still further in those black days of the craft, and even the quality of the wood and its grains, always one of the chief interests of American cabinet-makers, lost its importance. It was French polished, or stained and varnished, or painted, frequently in black.

After 1830, American furniture, as decorative furniture, the work of skilled and trained craftsmen, with a love of their art for its own sake, ceased to exist. The age of competitive design for the biggest markets had set in, and chaos reigned supreme.

Now in addition to the principal pieces of furniture—those which carried a style—such as chairs, cupboards, tables and so forth, of which we have spoken throughout this book, there were literally dozens of other articles, such as round-about chairs, corner cupboards, cabinets, joined stools, rocking-chairs, beds, "Shaker furniture," which the space at our disposal forbids our discussing beyond this very summary mention. However, in the majority of cases, such pieces in all countries bore the typical features of the current vogues of their day—in American furniture, as always, some 25 to 40 years after the popularity of its prototype—and a careful examination should show the intelligent student of the more important pieces to what country and style the minor ones rightfully belong.

CHAPTER XXII

GENUINE VERSUS FAKE AMERICAN ANTIQUES

EXPERTS—serious experts—will be amused at the heading of this chapter, for they and all of us know that such distinctions are almost impossible to make. We can tell a genuine Goddard cupboard from a similar piece by Townsend or any other disciple of the Newport master, by the sheer perfection of the genuine Goddard work. But who can tell whether a Townsend piece is genuine or not, unless there is an iron-bound pedigree of ownership to go by? The worm-hole factor can be eliminated in the choice of antiques for two reasons. Firstly: worm-eaten wood lends itself too easily to the deception of the uninitiated; secondly: no intelligent collector will put worm-eaten pieces among other more healthy articles of his collection. Not only is the wood-beetle, or "worm" practically impossible to eliminate, but such processes as are used in the attempt to do so damage that one all-important factor in the value of a piece of furniture, *viz.*, its patina. And as to the

habits of the wood-beetle, one worm-eaten piece is likely to infect other pieces hitherto "healthy" with the dread insect. There is little doubt of this contagious effect. *Verb. sap.*

A writer in a weekly magazine of large circulation essayed some time ago to prove that there is a plethora of genuine American antiques for all who wanted them. He proved his case thus. In 1830, there were twelve million people in this country, *i.e.*, 2,400,000 families. Allowing for breakage, etc., he leaves one bed for each family, so, he claims, there are more than two million antique beds extant, a bed for every ten families of today. These beds, by the way, date from 1830, not a particularly delectable period in American furniture design, bordering as it did on the age of "butcher furniture." By a similar reasoning, our statistician arrives at the conclusion that there is also one chair for every ten families of 1928 America . . . and one table.

Such arguments, however, only prove once more the fallacy of the old adage that "Figures do not lie."

A very cursory examination of *these* figures will immediately demonstrate their falsity as a basis for reasoning. For instance, we seem to remember a certain Civil War which lasted four years, in the

course of which old furniture must have been destroyed.

And what about the cholera epidemics of 1832 and 1834, totalling 2500 deaths? The furniture in these plague-stricken houses was certainly burnt. And the fires of 1835, one of which rendered 200 families homeless, while the other caused a loss of over $20,000,000. Again in 1845 there were two more disastrous fires. The cholera epidemics of 1849, with a death roll of 5000; of 1855, with 312; and of 1866, with 1212, also caused the burning of much infected furniture. These incidents took place in New York City alone. In Chicago the fires of 1871, 1872, 1873, and 1874 destroyed an enormous number of homes—that of 1872 alone accounted for 25,000—presumably with the greater part of the furniture.

In Boston, 959 homes were destroyed by fire, in 1872, while the year after another one caused a great loss of life and property. Charleston, South Carolina, was largely destroyed by fire in December, 1861, while in 1865, on its evacuation by the Confederate troops it was almost annihilated by the same medium.

These few incidents in the history of this country will demonstrate the folly of judging furniture quantities by population returns.

Except for the work of really great masters where that master's handiwork is clearly visible in every line, we doubt the possibility of anyone, however expert, being able to state without risk of error, that such and such a piece is genuinely antique, and of the period ascribed to it. That does not mean that "experts" will not make such definite attributions—else they would not be experts—but we recall the inspired dictum of Emmanuel Swedenborg: "It is no proof of a man's understanding to be able to affirm whatever he pleases, but to be able to discern that what is true *is* true, and what is false *is* false, this is the mark and character of intelligence."

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